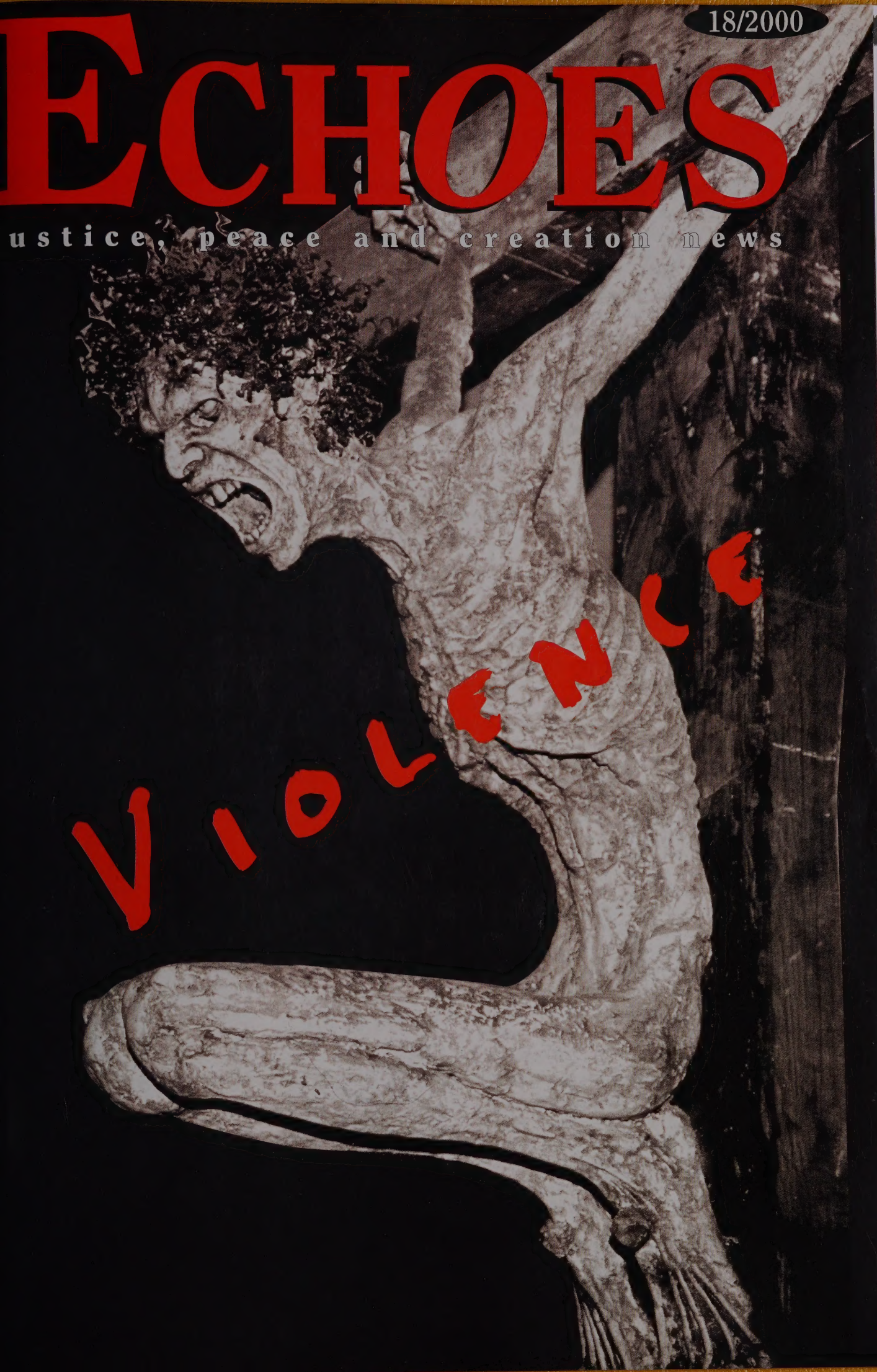
18/2000

ECHOES

justice, peace and creation news



Echoes From Elsewhere

An Introduction To Echoes Magazine In Reactions, Facts and Issues From All Over The World

WCC honours its first general secretary's 100th birthday

Geneva (ENI). The World Council of Churches has honoured the 100th anniversary of the birth of its first general secretary, the late W A Visser't Hooft, one of the towering figures of 20th century church history. At a special ceremony held in Geneva on 28 September, before more than 100 guests, Dr Philip Potter, WCC general secretary from 1972 to 1984, remembered a man "overwhelmed by the majesty of the cause" of ecumenism and impatient to advance it.

Catholic Church to investigate ways to stop child abuse

London (ENI). Two months after it was engulfed in controversy over a priest convicted of sex offences, the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales has announced an independent review of arrangements to prevent child abuse within the church.

Church book will help Protestants to relate to Germany's 3m. Muslims - Berlin (ENI)

As Germany's political leaders seek to combat increasing racism and violence against foreigners, the country's main Protestant body has published its first official statement on relations between Christians and Muslims. A 128-page handbook summing up the two years of study by the Evangelical Church in Germany's (EKD) special commission on relations with Islam was released at a press conference on 11 September in Berlin, Germany's capital.

Brazilians will dance their way around the world to spread peace - Hanover (ENI).

The language of dance can help the church to express its message, according to Lusmarina Campos Garcia, the Brazilian producer of a new contemporary dance performance commissioned by the World Council of Churches (WCC) to promote its Decade to Overcome Violence. The 40-minute performance – intended to challenge churches and civil society throughout the world to take action against violence – received its world premiere on Saturday 2 September at Expo 2000 – the world exhibition in Hanover, Germany. The dance was performed by Brazil's Marzia Milhazes Dança Contemporânea, with music from the Trio Aquarius. The dance tells the story of the WCC's "Peace to the City" campaign, a network of peace initiatives launched in 1997 and based in seven cities around the world. Using music, song, dance, light and colour, the production portrayed efforts to build a culture of peace world-wide.

Table of Contents

Editorial 3

Violence in the Church 4
Lesley Orr MacDonald

Violence in Africa 9
Samuel Kobia

Why, oh why 13
involve the children - Palestine

Armed conflict report 2000 14
Project Ploughshares

The violence of religious 16
intolerance
Bishop Azariah

So much violence 20
in the Bible
Amba Ewudziwa

The Violence 22
of Globalisation
Yash Tandon

Entertaining violence 28
Usha Jesudasan

Silent death - biowarfare, 30
Sunshine Project

Interview of 35
José Ramos-Horta,
Nobel Peace prize

Introducing the Decade to 38
Overcome Violence
Deenabandhu Manchala

Pages on SISTERS 42

Publications 46-47
& informations

Peace conference in Lisbon ends with Catholic apology to Portugal's Jews - Lisbon (ENI)

The leader of Portugal's Roman Catholics has issued a public apology to the local Jewish community for the suffering imposed on it by the Catholic Church, which in the 16th century supported an inquisition that expelled countless Jews or forced them to convert to Christianity. As an international religious gathering – Oceans of Peace: Religions and Cultures in Dialogue – closed in the capital, Lisbon, on 26 September, Dom José Policarpo, the Catholic Patriarch of Lisbon, expressed his church's regrets to the Portuguese Jewish community. Speaking in the centre of Lisbon, at the place where the inquisition once held its hearings, the patriarch apologised for his church's actions. After reading a short declaration of guilt and repentance, Dom José Policarpo embraced three Jewish rabbis and other representatives of the nation's Jewish community.

Editorial

Echoes
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Echoes is an occasional publication of the World Council of Churches' cluster on "Issues and Themes", Justice, Peace and Creation team.

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VIOLENCE

There can be no doubt that our way of thinking is influenced by where you are. I am writing from the South of the world, from Argentina in Latin America – Buenos Aires, to be exact, a large city of some 12 million inhabitants. Writing about violence from this place, as from other countries in the South, is to write about a fact of life and human situations which deeply grieve the heart.

Those of us who defended human rights in the South under harsh military dictatorships know very well that human rights are not an academic exercise but a living experience of suffering and grief – one that continues to sadden thousands of families who still do not know where to go to lay a flower on the grave of their loved ones who disappeared.

But violence today is a fact of life damaging communities everywhere in the world. The headlines of the newspaper I read this morning tell the story: Truck Drivers Strike in Argentina; Bank in Buenos Aires attacked – police officers and attackers killed or wounded; Bolivia, peasants and teachers block roads to demand their rights; Colombia, military power to be stepped up with the help of the United States; violent clashes between Palestinians and Jews... We may well ask "what's going on"? My answer is short and simple: we are living in a "civilisation" based on power and in a context like this, violence is built into the system, with all the consequences we know for the lives of people and the natural world.

However, power as such is not the problem – the real problem is the use we make of it. When power is used to serve life it creates good, when it is used to serve death it creates violence. In this conflict God is not neutral, God condemns power in the service of death and upholds the pillars of love-truth-justice and human dignity

Today the power of the globalised economy generates violence. The foreign debts of countries in Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa in particular are producing such extremes of poverty and human destitution that one Anglican bishop has denounced this as the new slavery. Never before in history have some 1000 million people in the world been affected by such a degree of violence. Military power and the manufacture of weapons are a continuing harsh reality, fed by conflicts around the world where huge profits are to be made. The political power of the rich nations determines the life and decisions of the impoverished countries. The power of racism and sexism go on generating violence against women, Black and Indigenous peoples. Not to speak of the millions of children living on the streets around the world, especially in Africa and Latin America, and the old people living as best they can in the poor countries and even in the big cities of the rich North.

I could include many statistics on poverty, malnutrition, exclusion and human destitution but these are not necessary for the readers of this publication. Let me just say, however, that behind the statistics are people who are suffering. On the other hand, it is important to remind ourselves that this is happening at a moment in history – the start of the third millennium – when humanity holds an unprecedented degree of power. In this context, life comes from any programme that dignifies the human person and defends nature. Death comes from networks trafficking in drugs or arms, and all abuse of women, workers, children, poor people.

I would not like to end this editorial without mentioning the word hope – but let us not confuse hope with mere optimism. Hope is grounded in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and his victory over violence and death.

Only those who are capable of giving their lives for the sake of the human person and taking concrete action to prevent violence have this kind of hope. This is the path of life.

Bishop Aldo M. Etchegoyan, Argentina
(a member of the WCC Central Committee)

VIOLENCE IN THE CHURCH

By Lesley Orr Macdonald

"If it be your holy will, grant that a place of your abiding be continued still to be a sanctuary and a light"

What does the word 'church' evoke for you? As a member of the ecumenical Iona Community, based in Scotland, these words (which form part of the daily worship of the Community) are deeply embedded in, and expressive of my faith and experience. They hold and carry a vision and a hope for the church of Christ on the tiny Scottish island of Iona, which for centuries has been experienced by countless people as a powerful place of encounter with God, of challenge and of peace. For me, as for so many others, Iona has truly been a sanctuary and a light. But the words of that prayer speak of more than a particular location, however resonant. In the midst of human struggle and passion and pain, in the heart of the common life, where are the places of God's abiding? Is the church, embodied in diverse human communities, structures and institutions around the world, a sanctuary and a light?

They found no sanctuary in the Christian church, for the violence they suffered was perpetrated, legitimised and compounded in the heart of the church

Here are some of the voices I have listened to for years: the voices of refugees who have had to flee from jeopardy, suffering and harm. They found no sanctuary in the Christian church, for the violence they suffered was perpetrated, legitimised and compounded in the heart of the church – by individuals and structures, attitudes and beliefs. Not just in Scotland, but all over the world. For too many victims and survivors of domestic and sexual violence, the community of the church has become an exclusion zone, as the Living Letters report of visits to the churches during the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women makes clear[1].

A sanctuary of care?

"I'm angry because the sexual abuse destroyed my self-esteem. I hated that experience of being used and discarded. The clergy should be CAREFUL with people. Playing with the bodies and souls of vulnerable folk is all wrong, and that carelessness is so hurtful to your sense of worth."

A sanctuary of healing?

"I was covered with bruises and scars, but the worst thing was to feel paralysed by fear. For too long, I accepted the degradation and humiliation, because somehow I was made to believe the violence was all my fault."

A sanctuary of truth-telling?

"The verbal abuse and lies were so hurtful and demeaning. And the whole congregation was caught up in a conspiracy of denial. Towards the end I felt the hypocrisy of the situation very badly. It was all so false, and the threat of exposure seemed the worst thing of all. So every action and every word is not true and is not you and is not real. It is all lies and abasement."

A sanctuary of affirmation?

"I went through absolute hell and felt like I was nothing, literally NO THING. I kept being told I was useless, hopeless, I couldn't do anything right. I wanted to try harder and harder all the time to be good, to please them, to stop them hurting me – and the more I tried, the worse it got. There was no 'I' left

Photo: Jean-Claude Lejeune, WCC.

in the end – just a shadow fading behind pillars and into walls."

A sanctuary of justice?

"I was made to feel guilty because somehow I had failed to conform to the image of Christian wife and mother. Meanwhile, in spite of being accused of gross cruelty, he's still a practising minister and was never held to account for his behaviour. But I'm the one who is made to feel bad – the wicked one who pulled back the veil of sanctimony and showed the filth beneath."

A sanctuary of courage?

"It took me years to pluck up courage and speak to the priest, and it angers me that he had none – courage, I mean. I thought he might have spoken to the abuser, but that seemed to have been too much for him. So he did nothing. I could see it all over his face: "Please God, just make this woman and her unpleasant story go away".

She did go away – away from the church, from the community of faith she had loved and served for a lifetime. She was abandoned and desolate, shamed into silence.

I was speaking recently with a woman who struggles every day to find a reason to live in the aftermath of hideous sexual abuse at the hands of a pastor to whom she turned for comfort and counselling, and who claimed this was part of God's plan for her healing. Since then, she has tried and failed to find compassion, justice or restitution from church leadership and institutions. No sanctuary for Joanna? But the perpetrators of violence against her find refuge in what she describes as an impregnable fortress, built to protect the powerful and respectable, and to keep out folk like her and the people she encounters in her daily work in a run-down part of Edinburgh: the poor, the homeless, the asylum-seekers, the chronically ill, the people who don't fit into the tidy boxes of 'decent society'. They're too disturbing and polluting.

I told Joanna about the Decade to Overcome Violence, and she responded: "Well, Christians know all about peace, because they sacrifice people like me to keep the peace. They cover up and deny and ignore violence in their midst. The leaders humiliate the victims, and then silence us: out of sight and out of mind. All the church did was hurt me and then abandon me, and now I feel like I was only made by God to get punished for the bad things powerful people did to me."

She spoke with anger. Her anger is better than the terrible soul-destroying despair which has laid waste the possibilities of flourishing and fullness in her life. Her words are better than the desolation of being silenced. They at least give Joanna the power to name her experience as violence.

Writing about the Programme to Overcome Violence, German Evangelical Church bishop Margot Kässman claims 'Few church leaders see violence within the churches as a major question to theology, a threat to the very being of the church; and some male church leaders still legitimise it...There is no way in which the churches can speak credibly about violence in society at large as long as they are not willing to deal with it within church walls.'[2]

Perhaps there is no way in which the churches can speak credibly about violence at all, because our theologies, traditions, histories and practices have been deeply implicated in creating the many layers and interlocking networks of human structures sustained by violent means. And perhaps church leaders fail to comprehend the fundamental challenge of violence to theologies and communities of faith, because they (we!) are the beneficiaries of a system which refuses to name and acknowledge the violence for which it is (directly or indirectly) culpable. Those who have the privilege and power to speak on behalf of Christianity, across confessional, theological and geographical borders, have too often claimed that the worst excesses of violence, destruction and atrocity – even those committed in the name of their particular religious brand – are regrettable aberrations, isolated from the benign and pacific intentions of the religious establishment and its guardians. Or they have excused, justified, blessed or sanctified the systems and structures which have diminished, harmed or destroyed unnumbered, unknown and unnamed peoples and communities.

There is no way in which the churches can speak credibly about violence in society at large as long as they are not willing to deal with it within church walls

I am haunted, in this time of renewed crisis in the Middle East, by the global epidemic of cruelty against women and girl children, the running sore of sectarianism here in Scotland as well as Northern Ireland, economic devastation in Africa, the destruction of Indigenous Peoples and their lands...an endless litany of pervasive, adaptable, tenacious, brutal, subtle violence. I am haunted and overwhelmed and confronted by the question, posed here by Jewish theologian Marc Ellis:

'The Christian world carries a burden into the present as a prime carrier and perpetrator of atrocity...The difficulty of Jews addressing a God who permitted atrocity on a mass scale against them is compounded in Christian communities that have sponsored atrocity for centuries. For what Christian language can be spoken after conquests that stretch

Credit: Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones, Lima, Peru. Reproduction of illustration from the book: "La larga marcha de las Casas", CEP, Lima, 1974, by J.B. Lassègue

centuries and continents beyond the Holocaust?..Is there a path beyond a religiosity that sponsors and is silent before violence?'[3]

What Christian language can be spoken? Is it the language of our scriptures – from Genesis to the Apocalypse a story of faith couched in the imagery of murder and revenge, blood-lust and war, rape and torture? Individuals are exploited and enslaved. Nations are invaded and colonised. Tribes are subjugated. Women are consumed and commodified. Sexual violence is accepted and eroticised. Children are disregarded and slaughtered for the sins of others. Jesus of Nazareth is humiliated and executed by an occupying power, acting in league with the religious establishment. And these biblical realities remain embedded in the social, economic and cultural realities of a globalised world. The alternative stories of subversion, resistance, human equality and radical community have been muted, dismissed or spiritualised out of harm's way.

Is it the language of those religious officials and power-brokers who have traditionally enjoyed privileged access to, and control of the sanctuary? They have delineated the boundaries between insiders and outsiders; between clean and unclean; between respectable and shameful, holy and contaminating, normal and different. Their words and their architecture express the potency of might and height, away from the earthbound, the everyday and the ordinary. Their theology has been used to legitimise male dominance, confirmed by a masculine God whose judgement, action and desire for the world has been understood to provide divine confirmation of mastery, subordination and obedience as appropriate patterns of human behaviour.

historically the hierarchies, rituals and structures of the church have been used to interpret and legitimise social structures of mastery – patriarchy, colonisation, capitalism – by linking them to the sacred and claiming them to ordained by God

In Durham Cathedral a thin black line is set into the marble floor near the back of the building, far from the altar. It marked the boundary beyond which women were prohibited to venture. That control has not just been a matter of gender, and it has been imposed in the name of Jesus Christ both to exclude and to incorporate subjugated peoples in mission stations and slave plantations; in religious institutions where children were 'assimilated' by forcible removal from their families to be brought up as white Christians. Dispossessed or disabled, gay and lesbian, deaf and blind: so many for whom the words, symbols and dynamics of worship have been disorienting and disempowering, failing to name, address or celebrate the realities of their lives. And historically the hierarchies, rituals and structures of the church have been used to interpret and legitimise social structures of mastery – patriarchy, colonisation, capitalism – by linking them to the sacred and claiming them to ordained by God.

What Christian language can be spoken? Is it the language of those men in positions of authority and leadership reported in *Living Letters* who have normalised the violation and abuse of women in the church and thereby hidden it under a veneer of sanctimony; men who 'frequently explained violence on the basis of culture' or 'queried the definition of "violence", wanting to distinguish between violence that resulted in death, and 'just hitting'.[4]

If we continue to use and listen to this language, spoken in and on behalf of the Christian church, we collude with definitions of violence which serve the powerful and silence the vulnerable. Men who abuse their power over women often find that physical force and threat is a useful strategy – but it is a means to an end which can be achieved in a variety of ways. The end is to control and delineate the life of another, and if that is considered an acceptable objective, a variety of physical, psychological, sexual, cultural and institutional forms of surveillance and coercion will be legitimised and normalised. They will not be defined as violence, except if used to excess – and who defines what that would look like? Those who want to distinguish between death and 'just hitting'?

So gender and sexual violence have flourished as acceptable, normal, erotic patterns of behaviour because men (including men in the church) have asserted the right to possess and use women's bodies and labour. One wife-beater claims 'domestic violence is rooted in two things: the *authority* you believe you should have over your wife, and the *services* you expect to get from her.' But haven't countless

Will our churches be fortresses of refuge for the powerful perpetrators of violence, or communities of courage, where hospitality is offered, and diversity celebrated, and abuse confronted with honesty, care and integrity?

men benefited from the same expectations – and haven't the institutions and officials of the church throughout two millenia?

Physical force and cruelty as a means to exert power over those considered of less intrinsic value or importance, is simply one end of a continuum of personal, cultural, economic and religious norms which are deeply embedded in most societies. Religious hierarchies and theologies have played a central an continuing role in the social construction of processes to legitimise, excuse, condone and sanctify the exercise of domination.

These processes are fluid, but can only be understood in relation to structures of power and control. The Spanish invaders of Latin America justified conquest in the name of their God of salvation, and condemned the violence of the indigeneous Aztec religion. But they did not perceive their own actions as violent.[5] Western Christians confess, in retrospect, their horrible complicity in the Holocaust, but are not so willing to acknowledge how the Bible has been used against their Palestinian sisters and brothers to 'silence us, to make us invisible, to turn us into the negated antithesis of God's "chosen people".[6] Around the world, church leaders and pastors still minimize and trivialise the suffering of women, while counselling them to self-sacrifice, duty, patience and submission for the sake of the gospel. How can danger and harm to the wellbeing of any person made in the image of God be good news?

What Christian language, then, can we speak ? Is there a path beyond a religiosity that sponsors and is silent before violence? That is the stark challenge if we in the churches, who have ready words of pious peace where there is no peace, can dare to embark on a Decade to Overcome Violence.

"I suffered violence. For years I didn't call it that. I knew it had harmed me – I knew HE had wounded me, betrayed my trust, exploited my weakness, imposed his will on my body and left his imprint on my soul. But I was expected to absorb it, to take the blame for it and to keep quiet about it. Why did these things happen to me, and why doesn't the church accept responsibility?
The violence is IN the silence, and people must summon up the courage to speak out."

Here is a language which can bear the weight of theological integrity. It is the proclamation of those who, with great boldness, cost and a theological clarity fired in the searing flame of their experiences, are choosing the path of prophecy: seeking to reveal the true faces of violence in the church, and to call us to account by rupturing the smooth veneer. The Vision and Mandate for the Decade to Overcome Violence calls for Christians to listen to the stories of those who are the victims of direct and institutionalised violence in the church. Because they are usually shut up – kept quiet by exclusion, fear, poverty, marginalisation, debilitating inequality and its social mores – it has been rare to hear from these people and communities, and rarer still to be touched and changed by them, as Jesus was by the outcast bleeding woman. Can we create safe spaces to listen and share, not with patronising concern which leaves the structures of domination and control intact, but attentive to the possibility and hope of transforming justice? Will our churches be fortresses of refuge for the powerful perpetrators of violence, or communities of courage, where hospitality is offered, and diversity celebrated, and abuse confronted with honesty, care and integrity?

I long for the church to be a supportive community. A place of friendship, fun and enjoyment, celebrating life and God. A sanctuary of courage, willing to challenge the causes of violence; not a place to hide from or conceal real suffering. I want to be all I can be. If only the church could be a place where it's safe to be just who we are – real flesh-and-blood-and-heart human beings, made by God, loved by God and redeemed in Christ.[7] A place of God's abiding, to be a sanctuary and a light.

Lesley Orr Macdonald is Associate Secretary with ACTS (Action of Churches Together in Scotland), consultant for the WCC DOV - Overcoming Violence Against Women and a member of the Advisory Group to the Justice, Peace and Creation team of the WCC.

Notes

1. *Living Letters: A report of visits to the Churches During the Ecumenical Decade* (WCC publications 1998, see especially pp26ff)
2. M. Kaessman: *overcoming Violence*
3. Marc Ellis, *Unholy Alliance: Religion and Atrocity in Our Time* (1997 SCM) xv, xvii
4. *living Letters 27*
5. See Elsa Tamez, "RelivingOur Histories: Racial and Cultural Revelations of God" in *New Visions for the americas: Religious Engagement and Social transformation, ed D Batstone (1993)*
6. Naim Ateek, "The Emergence of a Palestinian Liberation Theology" in *Faith and the Intifada:Palestinian Christian Voices* ed Ateek, Radford Reuther, Ellis (1992)
7. This quotation and all the others in italics come from research interviews conducted by Lesley Orr Macdonald for an action-research project conducted under the auspices of Edinburgh University's Centre for Theology and Public Issues: *Out of the Shadows: Christianity and Violence Against Women* 1995-7.

Violence in Africa

hoto: Hugh Mccullum - AACC / WCC.

By Samuel Kobia

There are new types of violence in Africa to which we have yet to find adequate ways of responding. But from an historical perspective, political independence in Africa was achieved through violence in response to colonialism and imperialism.

Independence struggles and the cold war

Dating back to the time of the Mau Mau war in Kenya and the Algerian liberation struggles in the 1950s, liberation movements fought for and first achieved independence in the 1960s. Subsequent struggles against Portuguese colonialism in Guinea Bissau, Angola and Mozambique in the mid-1970s, and finally in Southern Africa, Namibia and South Africa closed the independence process. This violence was legitimised by the need to overthrow colonial domination in Africa.

The cold war produced a different kind of violence. For instance, it was superpower rivalry that led to civil wars in Angola and Mozambique. By and large, RENAMO was a creation of western powers, with the support of apartheid South Africa, to fight the marxist FRELIMO government in Mozambique. Similarly in Angola, South Africa and the western powers, especially the USA, not only armed UNITA, but even envisaged a way to deal with the marxist MPLA regime that they did not really want in Angola.

A very disturbing characteristic of contemporary civil wars in Africa is the violence against civilian communities

Self-financing civil wars

But after the cold war, the USA and several European countries that had supported UNITA and RENAMO decided that this was no longer tenable. So having been built into a huge military force, UNITA in particular had to turn to mining diamonds to finance the war. At this point, we see the introduction into Africa of self-financing civil wars, a new kind of violence. Though a legacy of the cold war, the ongoing civil war in Angola is no longer ideologically driven but a struggle for the control of mineral resources.

Fortunately, the international community is beginning to acknowledge that diamonds are being used to finance civil wars in Africa. The USA and Britain have criticised the presidents of Liberia and Burkina Faso, Charles Taylor and Blaise Compaore respectively, for helping "Sierra Leone rebels to continue fighting a brutal civil war."

This trend is being repeated in several other countries in Central and Western Africa where ongoing civil wars are being fought not on ideological grounds but over who controls economic wealth. I see this as a very dangerous development because people elsewhere in Africa may also start using any excuse to form a "liberation movement", carve out areas where gold, diamonds and minerals are found, and claim they are in a legitimate struggle. This has happened in Angola, Liberia, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The legitimacy of any of these groups' claims to be liberation movements needs to be questioned.

Next generation of political leadership

Another type of violence has come with competition for the second generation of political leadership in Africa. For example, in response to the despotism of Idi Amin and Milton Obote, Ugandans introduced a new style of liberation movement in the early 1980s. Ugandans in exile, joined by other Africans who also saw the need to struggle against despots in their own country, organised themselves to acquire military training.

That was how the Uganda/Rwanda connection started. The Ugandan National Resistance Movement (NRM) invited Rwandese refugees, most of whom were Tutsis, to join hands with them. Once Yuweri Museveni took power in 1986 he in turn helped the Tutsi-led Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) to take over Kigali in 1994. This methodology was repeated in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Several factions led by Congolese in exile had been organising for a long time so that in 1996, with the support of Uganda and Rwanda, they were able to take over Kinshasa and put Laurent Kabila in power.

A similar trend is unfolding in West Africa. The Sierra Leone Revolutionary United Front (RUF) under the leadership of Foday Sankoh fought alongside Charles Taylor in Liberia, thus gaining military experience and organisational skills. Once Taylor came to power in Monrovia, he helped Sankoh to take over Freetown, replacing the democratically elected president Kabbah. Today the Sierra Leonian civil war rages on, financed by diamonds mined in the rebel-controlled areas of the country.

Children and civilians the main victims

When Kampala fell in 1986, the troops who spearheaded the takeover were mainly young boys. That was the first time we heard of child soldiers in Africa. Now it has become a pattern, with the same thing happening in Sierra Leone.

Another very disturbing characteristic of contemporary civil wars in Africa is the violence against civilian communities. Olara Otunnu, the UN undersecretary for Children and Armed Conflict, calls the killing of innocent civilians, particularly women, children and old people, the "abomination". This was unheard of in African traditions: you could never claim to be a warrior if you were killing women and children! It is a really new and very un-African phenomenon.

> The ongoing civil wars are fought, not on ideological grounds, but are struggles about who controls economic wealth

Most of those who are dying in today's civil wars in Africa are civilians and not soldiers. This is a tragic indictment of African political leaders who think little of their peoples' lives. In the past two years, civil war has caused the death of more than 1.7 million people in eastern Congo alone. These were unnecessary deaths. In "non-war conditions", the average death rate in this five-province area of 18 million people would be 600,000. The actual number of deaths was 2.3 million. "Of the 1.7 million additional deaths reported in the survey, 200,000 were caused by acts of violence, with the rest attributed to the war-related collapse of health services and food supplies."

It is not for nothing that the present civil war in Congo has been referred to as Africa's first world war. It involves about one dozen other African countries. What are they fighting for? There is no legitimate reason for them to be fighting today. What is worse is that resources that should be used for the benefit of the people are being used to acquire the weapons used to kill them.

> It has now become a pattern to use child soldiers in armed conflict

Private armies, gang violence

A dangerous offshoot of the violence is the evolution of private armies – another a new phenomenon in Africa – as distinct from either liberation movements or national armies. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, for instance, there are now no less than five factions, each of which has developed its own "army". Individual powermongers are also said to be taking advantage of the situation in the DRC to develop private armies. These will obviously be used in future as bargaining chips in bids for control of the state.

Another type of violence that deserves attention are young people's responses to societies that offer them no hope. In Kenya and South Africa among others, gangs of young people who dropped out of school because of poverty are "finding new ways to share the wealth of the society". They are mainly involved in "car-jacking" in broad daylight. They stop anybody. These gangs are well armed because small arms are readily available anywhere. The interesting thing is that gang members talk very openly. When they stop someone, they explain the reasons for their acts.

They say that society is organised in such a way that it forces them to drop out of school and therefore to lose hope. They say, "We cannot just sit back and wait for you people, with your good jobs and your good income to share with us. Since you don't share with us willingly, we're going to force you to share with us." They are saying that they are not criminal by nature, but that society has forced them to behave like criminals.

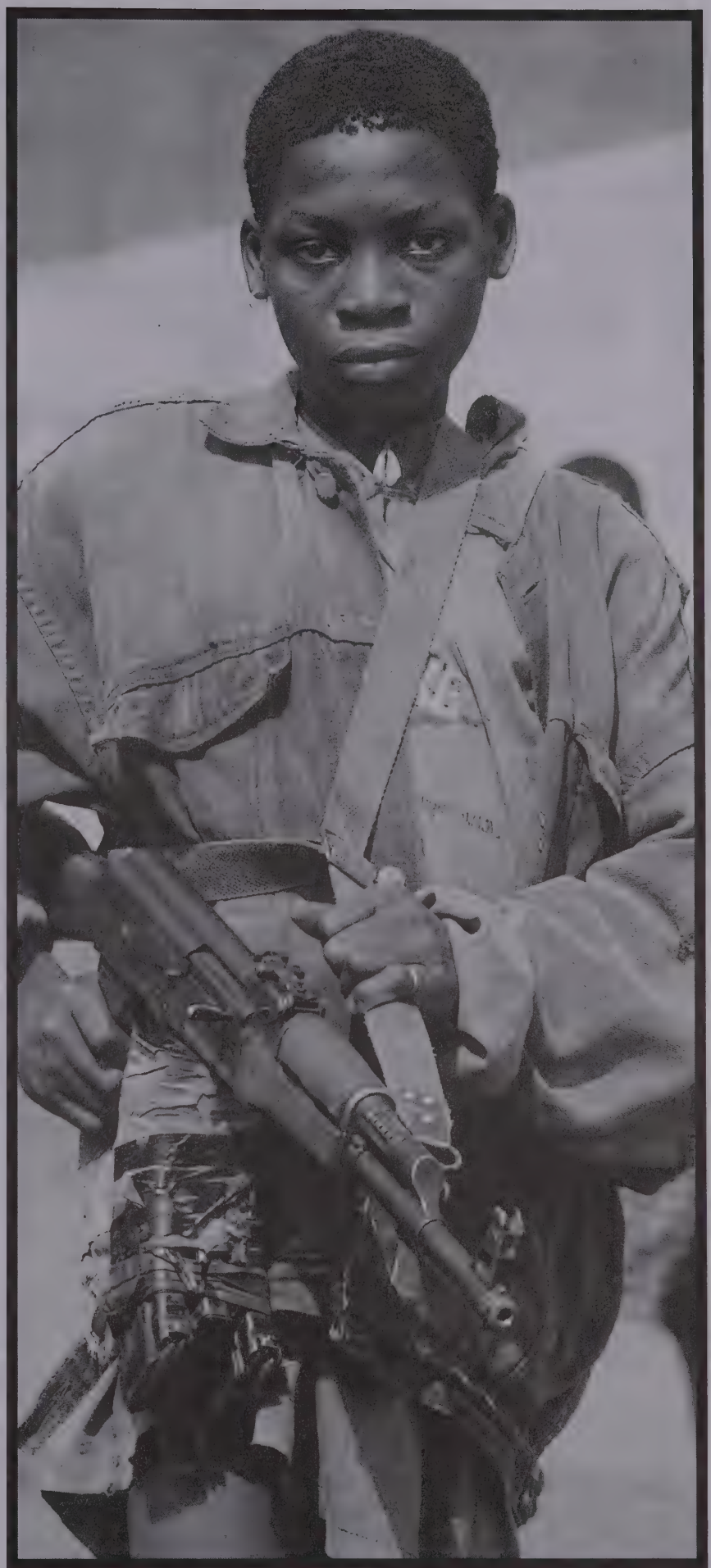

Photo: Jonas Ekströmer, WCC.

Photo: Sebastiao Salgado Jr, WCC.

Other forms of violence

Harsh economic conditions created by the debt, debt servicing, IMF and World Bank Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), and the withdrawal of state subsidies for health account for millions of additional deaths even in countries where peace prevails. Research should be done to establish the levels of debt- and SAP-related deaths.

And finally, in the post-cold war democratisation process violence has been precipitated by the politicisation of ethnicity. Afraid to face free and fair elections, incumbents have promoted politically-motivated "ethnic" clashes. For example, in the run-up to Kenya's 1992 general elections when multi-partyism became inevitable, ethnic groups which for years lived peacefully alongside each other suddenly began to fight.

There is a lot of talk about conflict resolution by groups inside and outside Africa but this type of social intervention has minimal impact. Dealing with all the different emerging facets of violence in Africa requires a deeper understanding of the problems than hurriedly-formed NGOs are capable of.

Africa's two faces

The media have projected an image of Africa as a continent in despair, a continent of famine, disease and tribal warfare. But the media hardly touch the way Africans look at life, Africa's life-centered ethic, the communities in Africa in which the art of living and even of dying are well understood – the positive side of Africa.

During the WCC assembly in Harare in 1998, we said Africa had embarked on a journey of hope. There is still a lot of hope. But this article attempts to call attention to a new and dangerous reality: I think we now have a class of Africans with an immense thirst for power and who are largely responsible for new forms of violence.

With so much hardship to contend with, you wonder how ordinary Africans can survive at all. Africa is largely excluded from global trade because of globalisation, and the nation state is extremely weak. But the people are surviving. One strength is our institutions of affection – such as the family and the community – which represent a very positive and good side of Africa. The other is the resilience of our spirit that helps to hold together the soul of Africa.•

Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia, from Kenya, is presently director of the Cluster on Issues and Themes of the WCC, Geneva, Switzerland.

WHY, OH WHY, INVOLVE THE CHILDREN?

RAMI*, NEVER WALK WITHOUT YOUR HELMET!

When Rami walked out of his home to accompany his father he was full of joy. For him, it was a rare chance to be with Dad who is at work from early morning till late in the night seven days a week.

Proud of joining his father at the market, he forgot to take his protection helmet, his anti-bullet vest and his machine gun. No one told him that this tiny little square, highly crowded with kids, had turned into a battlefield. He hoped that that evening he would not only enjoy the company of his father, but also bring back the football he had always dreamed of.

How he became a target for some Israeli kids, dressed in military uniforms, nobody knows. Rami was very confused about the ongoing game. The only thing that appeared real to him were his father's screams for mercy and his arms wrapped around him.

The strange speedy objects whistling near his ears were annoying, yet he felt pain when one of them crushed the bones of his left leg. On the other side, there was a smile; someone had achieved a direct hit on the target. What was the colour, the speed of the bullet that forced the last breath out of Rami's little chest? Only the young Israeli kid in the military uniform can tell.

We are all sorry, Rami. We tried to prepare a place for you to be a kid, not a victim, and we all failed. Until all warriors pay due respect to your little soul, I am not going to be interested in peace. ***I only knew about you and the killing bullet at the same time.***•

Written by Ghassan Andoni, director of the Palestinian Centre for Rapprochement Between People. Reproduced with permission from their website:
http://www.rapprochement.org/story_of_a_kid.htm

** RAMI is any Palestinian Kid who is trying to live. The real name of the murdered boy is Mohammad Al-Durra.*

ARMED CONFLICT REPORT 2000

By Ernie Regehr,
Director of the Project Ploughshares

After three years of steady decline, the number of wars fought world-wide increased significantly in 1999.By year's end there were 40 armed conflicts being fought on the territories of 36 countries, up from 36 armed conflicts in 31 countries in 1998 (and compared to 37 in 32 countries in 1997, 40 in 34 countries in 1996, and 44 armed conflicts in 39 countries in 1995).

The Armed Conflicts Report 2000 includes 6 new conflicts:

1. In the Horn of Africa, the Eritrea/Ethiopia war was the first international war since the 1991 Gulf war. Fighting between the two countries began in February 1998 but the most intense fighting occurred in 1999, resulting in deaths estimated to be in the tens of thousands.

- Two other current wars with prominent international dimensions are the war in Kashmir involving India and Pakistan, and Israel's incursions into Lebanon.

- The war in the People's Democratic Republic of Congo also involves armed forces from neighbouring countries but it remains unambiguously an internal civil conflict.

2. During the past two years fighting in the Andhra Pradesh state of India has escalated and resulted in several hundred deaths each year, pushing the total over the 1,000 mark in 1999. India continues to be the location of three separate armed conflicts (Andhra Pradesh, Kashmir and the Northeast Region).

3. Violent clashes between Christian and Muslim groups in the Molucca Islands of Indonesia resulted in more than 1,500 deaths, adding it to Indonesia's two other conflicts (Irian Jaya and East Timor, over which Indonesia relinquished its control in late 1999).

4. In 1999 clashes in several settings in Nigeria, including communal conflicts, Christian/Muslim attacks, and clashes in the oil region, resulted in the cumulative deaths going beyond 1,000.

5. In Senegal, rebel groups have been agitating for the separation of southern Casamance since 1982, and clashes in 1999 there too have pushed the cumulative death toll beyond 1,000.

6. Russia's war on Chechnya was renewed with particular energy in 1999, following a period of relative stability initiated by the 1996 truce agreement.

Defining Armed Conflict: For the purposes of the annual Armed Conflicts Report an armed conflict is defined as a political conflict in which armed combat involves the armed forces of at least one state (or one or more armed factions seeking to gain control of all or part of the state), and in which at least 1,000 people have been killed by the fighting during the course of the conflict. An armed conflict is added to the annual list of current armed conflicts in the year in which the death toll reaches the threshold of 1,000.

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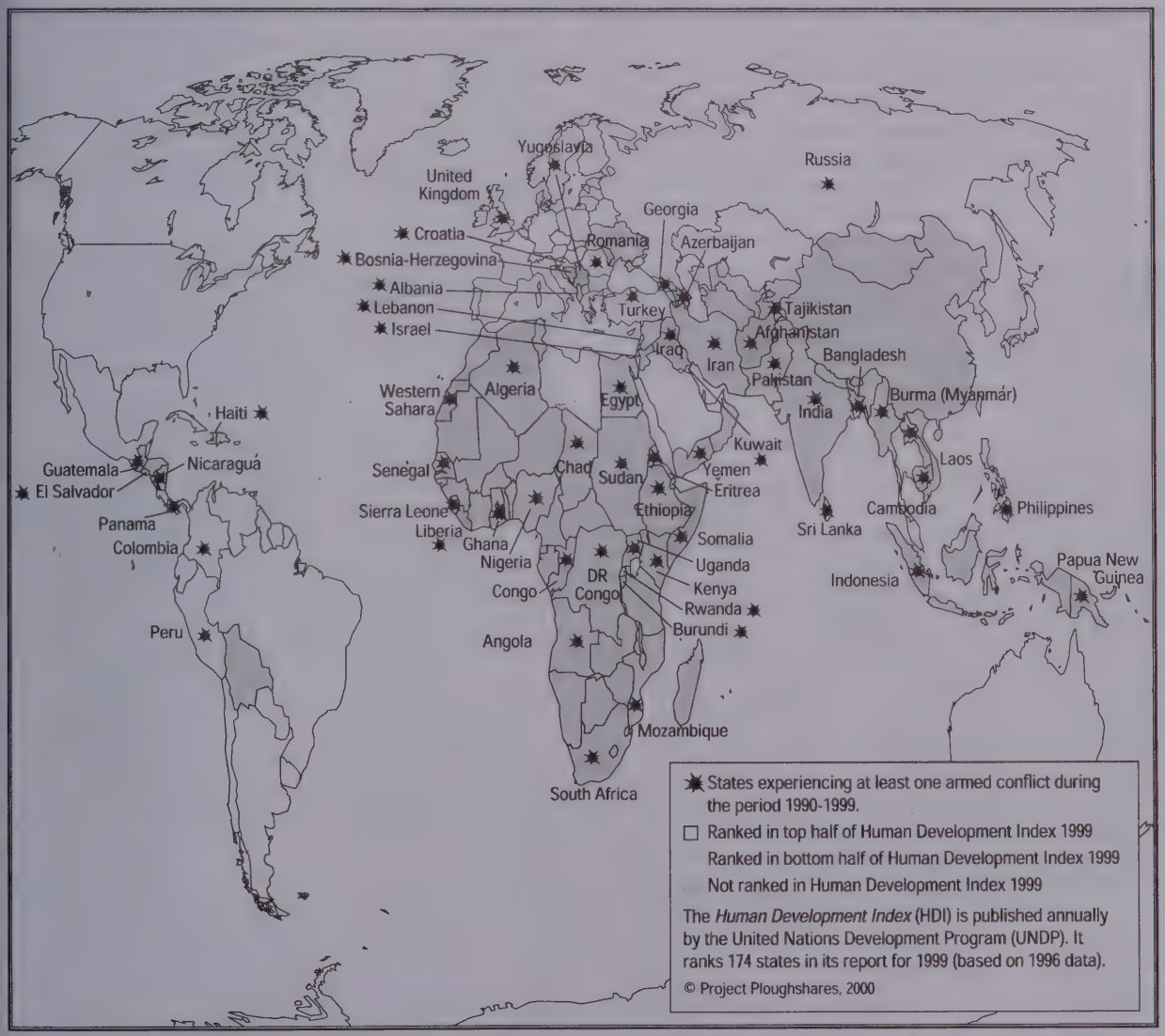
Web: www.ploughshares.ca

Geographic Distributions of Armed Conflicts in 1999

Region	# of countries in region	# of conflicts in region	# of countries hosting conflict	% of countries in region hosting conflicts	% of world conflicts
Africa	50	16	17	34	40
Asia	42	14	9	21	35
Europe	42	2	2	5	5
The Americas	44	2	2	4	5
Middle East	14	6	6	43	15
World Totals	**192**	**40**	**36**	**19**	**100**



Major sources: *Human Development Report 1999; Armed Conflicts Report* (Project Ploughshares).

Human Development and Armed Conflict

Fifteen percent of the states ranked in the top half of Human Development Index *1998 experienced armed conflict during the period 1989-1998; 41 percent of the states in the bottom half of the listing were at war during the same period.*

THE VIOLENCE OF RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

By Rt. Rev. Samuel Azariah

In this article I have focussed on the issue of religious violence with particular reference to Pakistan – its causes, the present state of affairs and what remedial measures can be adopted to build a culture of peace and tolerance. However, before I do this, let me briefly review the history of religious intolerance and violence.

Incidence of religious intolerance and the violence that often accompanies it is not a new phenomenon. It has been with us for centuries. The rise of nationalism in Europe was accompanied by state actions that led to persecution and evictions of religious communities that did not subscribe to established religions. In the 17th and 18th centuries, the British drove the Protestant minorities to the Americas. In the 19th century religious minorities throughout Eastern and Central Europe – Bulgarians, Greek, Jews, Turks, Hungarians, Serbs and Macedonians – were driven out of their homes.

religious intolerance and the violence that often accompanies it is not a new phenomenon. It has been with us for centuries

In many ways, what we witness today in parts of Africa, Asia and Europe is a re-enactment of a similar tide of religious violence that once swept across Europe when the emotional power of religion was aroused and manipulated to intimidate, harass and persecute the people. Despite the enlightenment that education and modernisation has brought, it is unfortunate that we witness yet again the negative impact of religion on our societies. Perhaps today more than ever before, religious symbols and idioms are being manipulated to promote hatred, intolerance and violence.

Perhaps today more than ever before, religious symbols and idioms are being manipulated to promote hatred, intolerance and violence

It is therefore not surprising that the UN Special Rapporteur, Abdelfattah Amor concludes his Year 2000 report to the 56th Session of the UN Commission on Human Rights by speaking about the forms of extremism. He says: "These forms of extremism very often originate with non-governmental bodies, sometimes with a group acting out of pure fanaticism related to ignorance and obscurantism, sometimes with extremist communities deliberately aiming to use politics in order to impose their religious views on society, but also and above all with 'professionals' of extremism exploiting religion for political ends. It is worth remaining aware and vigilant, however, regarding the passive or active complicity of state entities in most of those cases".

A cursory glance at contemporary conflicts in Sudan, Nigeria and Indonesia reveals not only the role of extremists, for example, in the form of private actors like the holy warriors from Java to the Malukus region in Indonesia in perpetuating violence, but also the inability of the state to control violence and restore law and order. In all three countries, extreme religious forces have manipulated and used religion to promote their respective political and economic interests. This has resulted in havoc and bloodshed. In face of this onslaught, the governments have either been afraid to take stringent action or have connived with the culprits in order to promote and protect their own personal political and economic in-

terests. It is perhaps this lack of political will on part of the governments to control religious violence that has given credence to the notion of the "clash of cultures" debate which divides the world along religious lines.

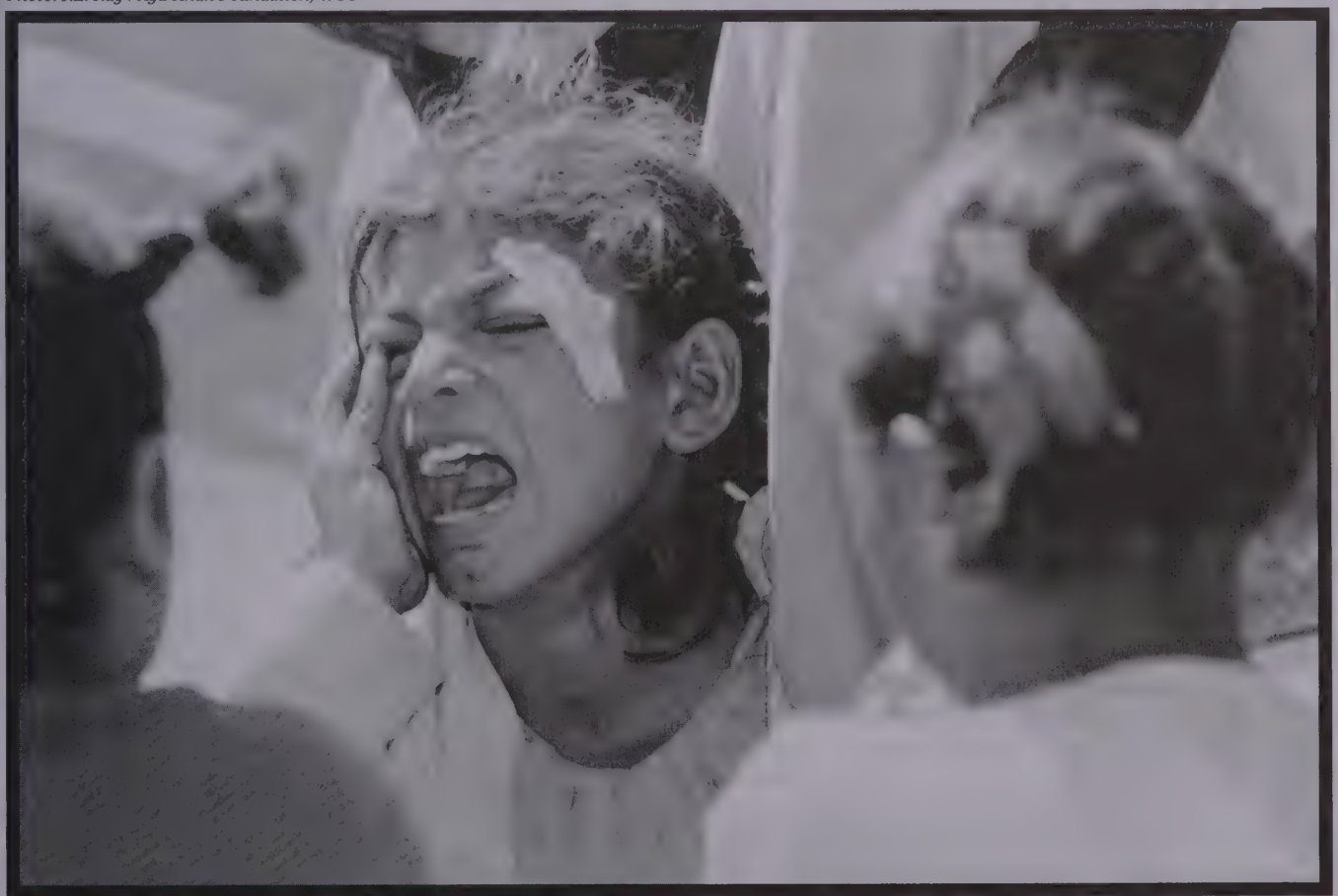
It is a well-known fact that in the post cold-war period, religion has come to play a dominant role. It is also a major factor in undermining the plural basis of our societies. So much so that even a country like India with its long-standing commitment to secularism and strong tradition of liberal democratic institutions is unable to escape the winds of intolerance. In fact, leaders of the religious majority in India have recently used the emotional appeal of religion to galvanize political power amongst the people. This has encouraged extremist religious forces in the country to create an environment of hostility, hatred and fear vis-à-vis the religious minorities.

According to the Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2000*, "The Hindu nationalist Indian Peoples Party (Bharatiya Janata Party or BJP) which led India's coalition government during the year, appeared to condone the activities of right-wing Hindu groups responsible for attacks on religious minorities and people at the bottom of, or outside, India's caste system, including members of tribal groups. These attacks increased significantly in the months proceeding national parliamentary elections in September and October. In Bihar a series of caste clashes and massacres between January and April once again reveal the unwillingness of the state authorities to protect the rights of those born in lower caste".

For decades, Dalits in India have suffered abuses, name-calling and humiliation at the hands of dominant caste groups – separate feasts, separate cemeteries even separately assigned seats in some churches are not uncommon. The treatment meted out to Dalits has received international attention. Some churches and related groups have taken the issue of atrocities and discrimination against the Dalits to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. They have campaigned for the appointment of a Special Rapporteur to document the human rights violations against the Dalit community as a result of intolerance and discrimination.

Anti-Christian violence, incited by religious extremists, has taken the form of killing of Christians and burning of churches in the tribal regions of Gujrat, Madhya Pardesh and Orissa. The burning of an Australian missionary, Graham Staines, and his two children in Orissa was one in the series of incidents of religious violence that have, of late, afflicted the Indian society. The government has done

Photo: J.L. Ray / Aga Khan Foundation, WCC



little to bring these hate crimes under control. This has badly tarnished India's Gandhian image of non-violence.

In Sri Lanka the ethnic conflict is now in its eighteenth year. It has taken a toll of thousands of lives on both sides of the ethnic divide. The conflict escalated in June 1983 when the rising tide of Sinhalese-Buddhist nationalism spearheaded wanton attacks on Tamils living in Colombo. The collective Sinhalese onslaught led by minister-of-parliament, Cyril Mathew had the characteristics of a religious ritual. Apart from the intransigence of the Tamil Tigers (LTTE), a major obstacle today to a negotiated settlement are the forces of Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinism that have convinced large sections of the people living in the South that a military solution is the answer to the conflict. Little do these forces realise that this approach is a drain on the country's much-needed resources.

Religious violence is not new to the sub-continent. The Partition of India and Pakistan was accompanied by a blood-bath of horrifying proportions. In the aftermath of the massacre that followed Partition, trainloads of dead bodies of Hindus and Muslims were sent across the lines of division between the two countries. Religious hatred was whipped to a frenzy by extremist forces on both sides, leaving wounds and scars that have yet to heal.

At that time, the founder of the Muslim movement for independence, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, promised that Pakistan would be a democratic state where people belonging to different religions would be free to practise their religion and have equal rights. Islamic party leaders who wanted Pakistan to be a theocratic state soon challenged him. The main challenge came from the Jamaat-e-Islami party led by the late Maulana Abul Ala Maudoodi, an Islamic scholar of repute. The first-known incidence of incitement to intolerance and hatred against religious minorities was directed by the Jamaat-e-Islami against the Ahmediya community – a Muslim group that does not subscribe to the finality of Prophet Mohammed. Hundreds of Ahmedis were killed and their worship places attacked in the campaign that was launched in 1954. The government declared martial law to bring the situation under control. For his part in the campaign, the court sentenced Maulana Maudoodi to death, but on the appeal of Saudi Arabia, he was granted clemency.

Again in 1971, religion played a significant role in the massacre preceding the break-up of Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh. Islamic vigilante groups created by Jamaat-e-Islami played an active role in the killings. Their task was to draw-up the list of people – intellectuals, academics, lawyers, journalists, trade union leaders, peasant and student leaders – who subscribed to secularism and were thus considered a threat to Islam. They were either killed or handed over to the Pakistani army for annihilation. Robert Payne in his book *Massacre* says: "Muslim soldiers sent out to kill Muslims ... went about their work mechanically and efficiently until killing defenceless people became a habit like smoking cigarettes or drinking wine. Before they had finished, they had killed three million people." These atrocities took place in defence of Islamic ideology and were actively supported by Islamic forces in the country using the military as an instrument to carry out their objectives.

In 1977, the late General Zia ousted the elected government of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. Bhutto was subsequently sentenced to death by a court in what many termed "judicial murder". General Zia ruled the country for over a decade during which the name of Islam was used to legitimise the army's brutal rule. On the pretext of introducing Nizam-e-Mustafa, the rule of the Prophet, discriminatory practices and policies against women and religious minorities were introduced. In the name of Islamising the social and judicial system, harsh and brutal punishments were introduced, including stoning to death and lashes for adultery, cutting of hands for theft and dacoity, public lashing for drinking and a mandatory death sentence for blasphemy. The regime incorporated a system of separate electorates into the constitution. This system discriminates against the minorities and reduces them to the status of second-class citizens. These laws have contributed towards the creation of an environment of hatred, intolerance and violence against women and religious minorities.

In the name of religion, cadres of holy warriors were raised from Pakistan and the Afghan refugee camps to unleash violence of unprecedented intensity.

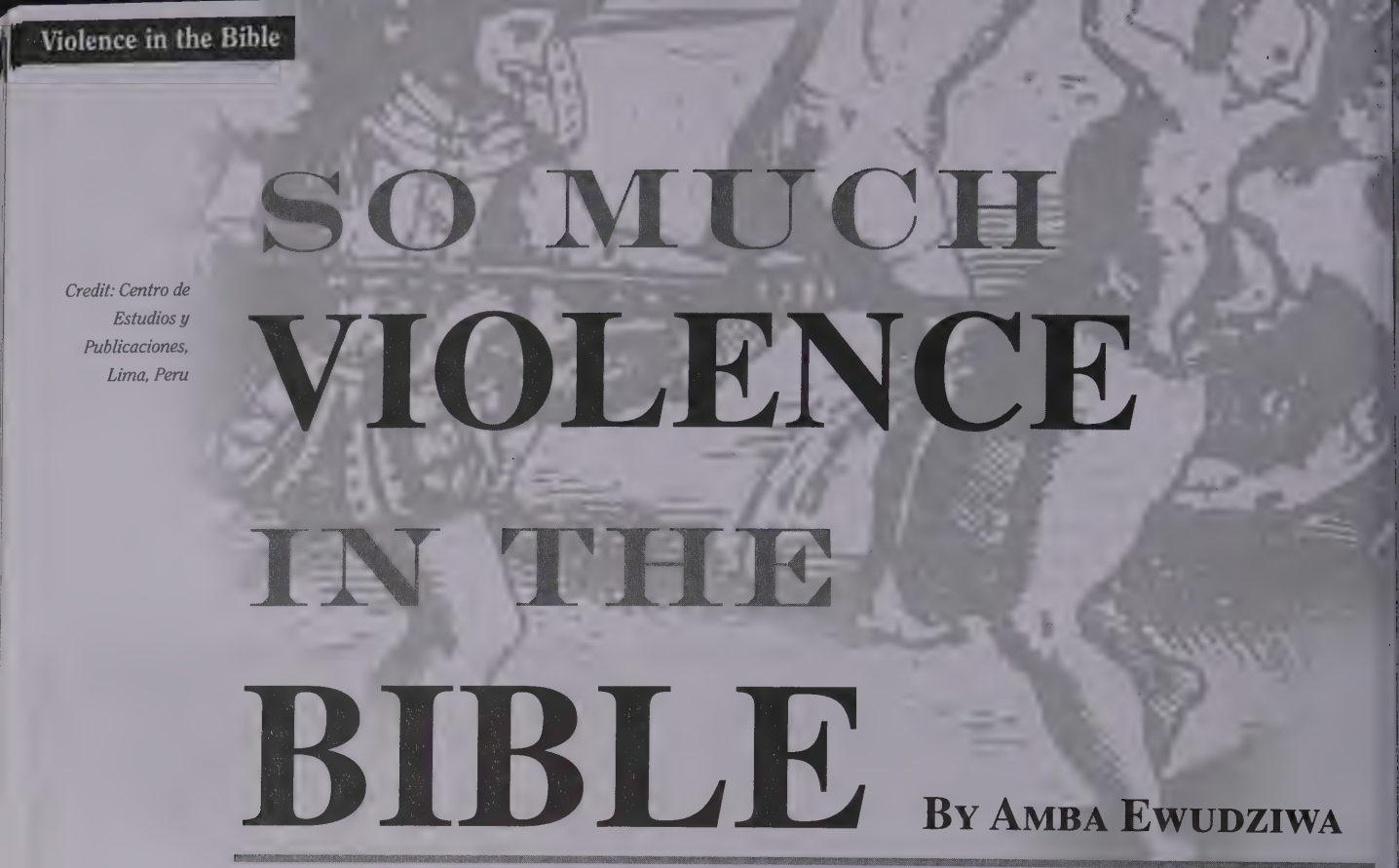
Also during the eleven years of General Zia's rule the army, backed and encouraged by Islamic parties and supported by the United States and Saudi Arabia, actively participated in the Afghan war. In this war, religion was used to fuel hatred against the Russian-backed communist government. In the name of religion, cadres of holy warriors were raised from Pakistan and the Afghan refugee camps to unleash violence of unprecedented intensity. The present rulers of Afghanistan, the Talebans, are a product of

that period. Known for their harsh and brutal punishments meted out in the name of Islam and their disdain for women, this group is nurtured and supported by the Islamic parties and the military in Pakistan, and by the US and Saudi Arabia.

Religious intolerance and violence have created havoc not only in Asia but in other regions as well. The church has a tremendous responsibility to build a culture of non-violence that accepts plurality and diversity. In this age of globalisation and inter-dependence, religions and beliefs must recognise and accept each other. They must work together for peace on the basis of common values that can provide a moral and legal framework for realisation of human rights and respect for the human dignity of all people, a culture of global accountability and tolerance that accepts diversity of beliefs and religious practices. •

Rt. Rev. Samuel Azariah is Bishop of the Church of Pakistan, Riawind Diocese and member of the World Council of Churches' Central Committee.

Photo: John Eberssole, Church World Service, NY, WCC



Credit: Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones, Lima, Peru

SO MUCH VIOLENCE IN THE BIBLE

By Amba Ewudziwa

Dear Friends,

I am not sure if I should thank you for asking me to do this. I am not a biblical scholar. My Hebrew and Greek have rusted away with disuse, but I do read the Bible in several English versions and also those in the dialects of the Akan language I speak in Ghana.

I never cease to have misgivings about labelling some of what I read as "the word of God". Returning home to Ghana, I discovered a vigorous religious fervour, which makes quotations from the Bible the final arbiter in all arguments. It makes me shudder. Once I listened for about 30 minutes to the conversation of four young men on what is decent dressing for women. Trousers were taboo because the "Bible says: cursed is the woman who wears men's clothes."

Working on gender sensitivity with religious bodies and educational institutions is an uphill task. The Bible has so much that goes in the direction of overcoming violence... but that is not what I hear around me! It was this frustration that I needed to share. I am not raising the 'Problem of Evil' nor 'Original Sin' nor 'Vicarious Suffering' nor theodicy. I am simply saying there is "so much violence in the Bible!"

In 1984, Phyllis Trible of the Union Theological Seminary (N.Y.) published a book entitled *Texts of Terror* (Fortress Press). Her texts were from the Bible, the book we Christians accept as the word of God. The Bible is in the public domain; it is a book on which all can sundry and pontificate. It is the Bible of people, and it is this Bible whose violence terrifies. The murder and dismembering of a woman horrifies us, but we easily accept a father's execution of a daughter to fulfil a vow if it is in the Bible.

We do not read very far before we meet the creator God sending a flood to destroy all that exists saving one human family and pairs of animals. If you have witnessed a flood on TV, you know the suffering of trees, plants, animals, desperately clinging to branches... Imagine how the humans who were not saved died. It is in the Bible that human beings were turned into pillars of salt. It is in the Bible that God caused the sea to open and swallow up human beings and horses. When 'natural' disasters happen today, do we attribute them to God? Should we attribute them to God? Is the violence in nature a sign of the violence in us – the human beings who are part of nature? Does this violence justify the violence in our style of life?

Have you ever thought of how Isaac felt when he was bound, put on the firewood he had carried and saw his father's raised hand above him holding a gleaming knife? Would you ever trust such a father again? Yes, the event allowed Abraham to demonstrate his faith. But what effect does the story have on a young boy in a Sunday school class? It is in the Bible that God waited for human beings to raise a tower and then sent angels to destroy it. Well, one interpretation of that story is that it was God's way of saying that living with diversity is more challenging, if not more fun. But you have seen buildings erased to the ground by bombs? Have you seen people trapped under the debris of blasted buildings? Did God warn the builders of the tower before the implosion? The simple fact I am left with is the use of violence to teach lessons.

There are texts of cheating siblings, of cheating employers, conniving women, war-lords, mass destruction of prisoners-of-war and their property at the command of God. There are unpunished rapes and rapes that bring punishment achieved through deceit. The promised land was peopled, but the Indigenous people had to be massacred, displaced or absorbed. All this was said to be the will of God, depicted as a tribal deity whose concern is only for the chosen people. Of course, other parts of the same Hebrew Scriptures give a contrary view. Our aim

here, however, is to show how human beings have claimed that the violence they do to other human beings and the rest of nature is sanctioned by God.

Why do we say nothing of the psychological violence done to the raped Dinah? What do we say about the mental torture that drove Tamar to trick her father in-law into sleeping with her?

These are random flashes from the Hebrew Scriptures, but the New Testament is not free of this wanton destruction. We have Herod's massacre of children under two years old, the destruction of a herd of a cattle and a tree by Jesus, the driving away of traders from the Gentile court of the Temple at Jerusalem. All these have perfectly satisfactory theological explanations. It is about violence in a violent world, yes. But how do we overcome the negative effects of this scriptural violence? How do we stop the psychological violence done to women as a result of biblical language about women?

We do not give enough background to Biblical texts, and treat all as a mandate for what we do. How can we prevent the Bible from being used as the source and reason for all human history and behaviour? I am struggling with a view of God that includes God's command that the other should be destroyed. I am looking for a way of saying that the Bible is the one-sided view of the happenings of particular periods of time and places, and that the book as we have it even has an *internal critique* of this violent God who commands, condones or blesses violence. We should ask 'Is this the word of God?' By what criteria do we distil the word of God from the historic experiences of a people?

As an African sensitive to the violent displacement of Africans to make room for Europeans on this continent, the stories of the conquest of Canaan and the massacres of Indigenous peoples are not my favourites. They have been used against us, and Africans are still suffering from the misappropriation of these biblical texts to the benefit of peoples of European origin.

As a woman, I shudder at the rape of women in the Bible. Current ritual murders of women in Ghana bring images of Jephtah's sacrifice of his unnamed daughter to mind. The many women thrown out of marriages to care single-handedly for children recall Hagar.

When I evoke violence in the Bible, I am thinking mostly about the bloody violence done in the *name of God*. But just see how much violence has been done, from Genesis to Revelation, to the *image* of woman and how men and women, caring nothing for hermeneutics, historicity and the continually changing cultural understandings of God have caused so much physical and psychological battering of women and children!

How do we overcome the use of violence in the Bible as the justification and legitimization of the violence we do today? If this question is not considered people will continue to take the Bible seriously and will continue to say that to be head is to be boss, and that culture and Bible agree that a woman cannot be boss. Men will continue to discard the Hagars in their lives even without instructions from the Sarahs because Abraham, the father of the faith, began the tradition and because early missionaries to Africa destroyed African families. In favour of monogamy, polygamous men had to send away the "extra wives". The church did not ask what happened to those wives and their children.

People will continue to seek their own comfort even if they have to sacrifice other human beings to achieve that end and they will quote you fitting biblical passages. I am simply stating a fact and a concern that there is so much violence in the Bible and hoping we can work on it together. •

Amba Ewudziwa, better known to us as Mercy Amba Oduyoye, was a staff member of the WCC from 1987 to 1994, the last three years as deputy general secretary. She is currently director of the Institute of African Women in Religion and Culture.

Abraham and Isaac

THE VIOLENCE OF GLOBALISATION

By Yash Tandon

EVEN AS ITS PROPONENTS SPEAK OF INCREASED PROSPERITY AND INVESTMENT CONFIDENCE, THE PROCESS OF GLOBALISATION BREEDS VIOLENCE AND CONFLICT WHEN IT CONTINUES TO PRODUCE INEQUALITY, POVERTY, ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTION AND UNPRECEDENTED CONCENTRATION OF ECONOMIC POWER FOR A FEW WHILE THE MAJORITY ARE MARGINALISED AND EXCLUDED. AFRICA IS A VICTIM OF THIS SAD PHENOMENON OF GLOBALISATION. THE CUMULATIVE ADVERSE EFFECTS OF GLOBALISATION ON AFRICA REQUIRE CAREFUL AND DEEP ANALYSIS WHICH GO BEYOND THE CONTEMPORARY DOMINANT IDEOLOGY OF THE FREE MARKET AND THE "BLAME THE VICTIM" SYNDROME. ECHOES ASKED PROFESSOR TANDON TO LOOK AT THE ISSUE OF THE VIOLENCE PRODUCED BY THE PROCESSES OF GLOBALISATION, USING AFRICA AS A CASE STUDY.

On causes of conflict and violence, there are two major lines of thought. The mainstream or dominant theory tends to emphasise the *internal* factors within a nation as the root causes. These have to do with lack of economic growth on the one hand, and poor governance on the other. The corresponding solutions are economic growth and good governance.

Whilst there is much that may be accepted in this analysis, its principal fault is that it does not adequately analyse the international, or global, dimension of the conflicts, and it does not connect various factors in an holistic manner. This is so because of its stake in the preservation of the existing system. Thus, the very factors that have impoverished a region – namely exploitation by foreign capital under conditions of free market – are the ones offered by mainstream thinkers as solutions to that region's economic woes.

The alternative perspective reasons that while poverty is at the root of conflict and violence, it does not simply exist but is created by the manner in which a region is integrated into the global economy. The basis of this integration is the unequal exchange between what the region contributes to the global economy and what it gets in return. This is legitimated by the ideology of the free market, but behind the free market are big monopolies and oligopolies that control the markets – from diamonds to beef to Microsoft software. The free market is a myth. The violence is rooted in the region's continued impoverishment by the system.

Mainstream Thinking on Peace and Conflict in Africa

Mainstream ideas on the structural causes of conflicts in Africa presented by the World Bank and the IMF[1] could be the first place to start with analysing these ideas. However, the World Bank/IMF ideologists are easy targets these days, and so, to give the mainstream ideas a fair chance, we rather take up for examination the views of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan. As an African who was actually involved in conflict resolution in Africa – Somalia and Angola, for example – he is singularly qualified to address this issue.

Photo: Peter Williams, WCC

What makes his thinking significant is that he has to balance the ideas of the dominant Bretton Woods institutions with those of the developing countries which constitute the numerical majority of the UN's membership. Of course, he cannot afford to stray too far from the dominant set of ideas or he would not be there in the first place.

This balancing of ideas between World Bank/IMF type of hard core thinking and that of the third world states, is not done consciously. It is embedded in the history and culture of the UN itself. The Secretary-General then becomes the carrier of these ideas; he institutionalises them. It is important to understand this context not only because this helps us to understand why the Secretary-General is saying what he is on peace and conflict in Africa, but also because it helps us to avoid raising unnecessary questions, such as why the UN did not play as aggressive a role in Angola as NATO did in Kosovo, for example.

Let us start with the external or international dimension first. The easiest entry point here is the economic sector. Take the debt issue, for instance. The Secretary-General's facts about the debt burden are generally accurate. In 1995, he says, Africa's external debt totalled $328.9 billion – of which approximately 45 per cent was owed to official bilateral sources, 30 per cent to official multilateral sources, and 25 per cent to commercial lenders. To service this debt fully, African countries would have had to pay to donors and external commercial lenders more than 60 per cent ($86.3 billion) of the $142.3 billion in revenues generated from their exports. In fact, African countries as a whole actually paid more than 17 per cent ($25.4 billion) of their total export earnings to donors and external commercial lenders, leaving a total of $60.9 billion in unpaid accumulated arrears.

In other words, Africa could not even service its debts; it paid $25.4 billion of the $86.3 billion of the interest it owed to its creditors. Thus, instead of reducing the debt stock it actually increased by a further $60.9 billion. The debt goes on piling year after year. Why do the creditors appear to be satisfied with receiving only about a third of the interest owed to them on past debt? One explanation is that they cannot afford to ruin the potential market in Africa for

Photo: Sebastiao Salgado, WCC

their goods and for their future investments, which is what would happen if they forced Africa to make the debt payments in full. To deal with this situation, the IMF has created a concept of sustainable debt, i.e., debt that can be paid out without ruining the economy. It is the same thing, really, as sustainable poverty: keeping poverty in Africa at a level where people do not actually fall down dead.

In the case of Mozambique, to illustrate the point, sustainable debt means letting Mozambique pay a certain portion of its export earnings so that it continues to import at least something from the rest of the world. By going easy on Mozambique this way, the creditors create the illusion that they are being nice to Mozambique. But all the time the debt noose is tightening around its neck because it is getting bigger and bigger simply through interest arrears. The creditors can use this debt noose then to impose a structural adjustment programme on the state, and to persuade it to keep the doors open to foreign goods and capital.

Let us link this to the bigger picture. There are two important related questions: how did the debts arise in the first place, and why very little is in fact done to remove this formidable barrier to Africa's development when it is generally recognised that without removing the debt burden there is no hope for development in Africa? These questions become important when we make the *link* between debt and economic development, and between lack of economic growth and conflict: we can argue that one of the significant causes of conflict in Africa is the struggle for survival in a situation of scarce resources. The debt imposes severe strain on these resources. This struggle for resources manifests itself in the struggle for state power. Further, given the historical division between ethnic groups in Africa (exacerbated during the colonial rule, as in Rwanda, for example), the conflict can trigger civil war and even genocide. Here we have one *root cause* of conflicts in Africa. The *debt* carries a heavy responsibility for civil strife and war in Africa; its cancellation can be a major move to sustainable development and peace in Africa. However, it is not in the rule of the game of global financing to simply write off debts because such a move can have serious systemic consequences. Also, even if debts were written off today, they would spiral up again given the inherently unequal economic relations between Africa and the industrialised world. Of course, every aspect of conflict and peace cannot be pinned down to debt. Complex matters cannot be reduced to single factors. But given the *linked* nature of all these factors, it is difficult to separate the significance of one factor from that of others. The principal reason of debt is unequal trade relations between Africa and the rich countries.

None of these issues is explored in the Secretary-General's report. The reason for this apparent oversight is that in the dominant discourse, these systemic causes of debt cannot be revealed; they could de-legitimate the system itself, and thus its survival. It is far easier to offer technical solutions such as the HIPC (Heavily Indebted Poor Countries) initiative, that seeks to write off part of the debt in return for certain binding commitments, than to raise *political* issues which put into question the whole system of Africa's exploitation by the industrialised countries.

This is what we mean by the partial nature of the mainstream discourse on the causes of Africa's conflicts. Even the UN, let alone hard-core institutions like the World Bank and the IMF, cannot afford to tell the whole truth about debt.

Of course Africa's debts have many complex political and economic causes. Take the debts left by Mobutu in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, or those left by the apartheid regime in South Africa. Everybody now accuses Mobutu of corruption and bad governance. With better use of borrowed money and with a more accountable system of governance, the country should not have had to face the present problem of debt. But the real question is: why did the rich countries go on putting money into Mobutu's coffers in *full knowledge* of his corruption and undemocratic governance? Why was it not an issue before, and why now?

Much is made in mainstream discourse about mismanagement of borrowed funds. Connected to this is the inability or incapacity of civil society to make governments accountable for the use of these funds. But the point is that whilst all these factors are relevant, and linked, why were they not raised in earlier times, and why now?

the truth has to be faced that the most significant reason for the debt is unequal trade relations between Africa and the industrialised countries

Mismanagement and corruption aside, the truth has to be faced that the most significant reason for the debt is unequal trade relations between Africa and the industrialised countries. There is a structured, or systemic, relationship between the products exported by Africa and those imported that ensures that Africa has to go on producing more and more of the same to get less and less of the imports from the rich countries. The fact of the matter is that Africa is weak and impoverished because its rich natural resources are taken away from the continent at a fraction of their value. The terms of exchange between Africa's natural resources and the West's capital-and-knowledge intensive technologies continue to remain the basis for vast seepage of net value out of Africa and into Europe, the USA and Japan. In other words, a no win situation for Africa is embedded within the system itself. We are saying nothing new, of course. Nyerere drew attention to this in the 1960s, and 30-40 years down the road, it continues to be the most significant factor of Africa's sustained impoverishment.

To ask why some East Asian countries were able to get out of this vicious circle of poverty opens up a different debate. One explanation is that Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore and Hong Kong were deliberately encouraged, and assisted, by the USA to build their economic infrastructure to fight against communism. Japan later helped the second-tier countries such as Malaysia and Thailand to industrialise. These developments were thus a product of the cold war. Now that it is over, the West is systematically rolling back the gains these countries made. In the aftermath of the East Asian financial meltdown, starting with Thailand in August 1997, the West has reasserted its control over the banking, financial and industrial power centres in South Korea, Indonesia and Thailand. Even Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and Japan are no longer protected from mergers and take-overs by Western corporations. Only China is resisting this renewed aggression by the West, though there is some doubt whether it can hold on for long. The point is that it is no longer possible to point to the South East Asian economies as models of a successful break from the dominant control of the powerful countries of the West.[2]

We took the issue of the debt only as an example. The same kind of analysis can be applied to any of the other elements in mainstream discourse. For example, who can dispute the importance of the rule of law, or the need to have governments accountable to the people – elements which the Secretary-General's report says are important for establishing the basis for an enduring peace in Africa? Of course, these aspects of good governance are important for Africa. They are important not because the West now includes these as part of the conditionalities for aid to Africa, but because Africans also value life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, just like anybody else.

Transforming The Culture Of Violence

Why do conflicts degenerate into spasms of uncontrolled violence that defies all canons of humanity, wisdom and tolerance? We have seen human carnage in many conflict-situations in Africa – Rwanda, Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, the DRC, to name a few. Erstwhile friends become overnight enemies; neighbours kill each other with machetes; families split along ethnic lines. In Rwanda alone, in a matter of 100 days, about a million people were massacred – a scale of killings that is almost unprecedented in world history. So even if there are good reasons for conflicts, there are no good reasons why these conflicts degenerate into violence and brutality that shame humanity. Why do these things happen?

We are not competent to go into the group psychology where some of the answers to this perplexing phenomenon must lie. What we can offer are some ideas on how to move forward in this complex area.

Gandhi's answer to violence was not to offer counter-violence, but to sublimate it by offering oneself as willing victims of violence and overcoming it with soul force (*satyagraha*). Whilst fighting against the British Raj, this strategy, despite occasional lapses, was remarkably successful. But when the partition came between India and Pakistan, all the lessons learnt from years of *satyagraha* could not stop the human carnage. Is it because in the struggle against the British, the people were fighting for *satya* (or truth) against a rule that had become immoral and unsustainable, whereas it was difficult to know where truth lay when it came to partition? Then everyone was for himself or for family or for religion. Truth lay, as it were, on both sides. But this still does not explain the sheer brutality or inhumanity of the violence.

In our view, human nature has both evil and good aspects. It is the function of religions and spirituality to arouse the good against the evil, but religions have not proved to be dependable allies in the struggle against violence.

If individual soul force becomes a spent force in times of inter-ethnic violence, and if religions are not dependable allies, then the only option left is to create institutional structures that can prevent conflicts from erupting into violence. We know, for example, that the Bahutu and the Watutsi in the pre-colonial period had complex institutional structures that not only enabled social mobility across class/caste lines but also across ethnic lines. We also know that the clan system in Somalia had complex structures that balanced the rights to grazing and water of different clans, and a system of disputes resolution that preserved the integrity of the clans as well as social peace.[3] These structures were destroyed during the colonial period, and nothing viable put in their place except the authority of the colonial powers. So when this authority was removed at independence, there was nothing to fall back on by way of institutional checks and balances.

So a short answer to the problem of violence is that we need to work at various levels – at the individual level with education as the key element; at group level where a culture of tolerance and mutual respect need to be consciously inculcated; but above all, at a national level where durable and credible institutions which balance the rights and responsibilities of groups (however defined) need to be put in place.

Democratic institutions that balance rights and responsibilities and provide for the rule of law are tried and tested methods of resolving conflicts without resort to violence at the national level. But even here, we have discovered that the representative form of democracy that is practised in most Western countries cannot deal with other kinds of violence such as inter-state violence, or structural violence that is embedded in the economic system. Western democracies are hegemonious and too readily resort to violence and war against countries that do not conform to their order and authority. Also, structural violence as embedded in the free market system, of which Africa is victim, is something that, within the Western system of morality, is a permissible kind of violence. So the system of democracy developed by the West has many defects. *We need to try other forms of democracy, such as participatory or communitarian forms.*

Conclusions

The issues of conflict and peace are central to all those who are concerned about the future of Africa. We have seen that over the years the nature of conflicts in Africa has changed. The anti-colonial wars and border conflicts have given way, by and large, to intra-state, or civil, wars.

So what is to be done? Delinking from the system is not a viable or practical option for Africa. But there are ways in which Africa can partially de-link itself from the global market. Already the bulk of Africa's populations survive by their activities in the so-called informal market. This is not to glorify the informal sector, but to say that a condition of being de-linked is already a reality for millions in Africa. What is needed is a more concerted effort to strengthen those institutions and structures that are able to survive in a de-linked environment.

A second line of defence for Africa is to re-negotiate its terms of integration into the global system. This the African governments will not do on their own because they are conditioned by the agreements they have entered into with the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO, and the donors, and by the specific interests of their elites. They may take action only when pressurised by the grassroots and community organisations. However, where governments have ceased to respond to the just demands of the people, the latter may have no choice but to resort to various forms of *direct action* in confronting their states.

One issue on which direct action is called for *immediately* is the annulment of all debts owed by Africa to the rich nations. The various schemes offered by the Bretton Woods institutions (such as HIPC), and accepted by African governments, are mere palliatives that obscure the reality behind debt.

What is needed is the transformation of both the economy and the nature of the state. The economy has to be brought back under the control of the people and reshaped to service primarily the needs of the people, and not those of the exporters of Africa's wealth. The kind of state that is needed is not the min-

imum state, much favoured by the IMF and the World Bank, but the responsible state. The minimum state leaves power in hands of corporations. What we need are states that can carry out their social responsibilities. The people need a state that can resist pressure from the WB/IMF, and donors one that can ensure food security, build self-reliance in industry, regulate strategic sectors to protect national sovereignty and economic stability, and enable the exploitation of natural resources by indigenous people first and foremost for their own benefit and then for export if necessary. We need to do away with a unitary, centralised, authoritarian state system; to encourage a political culture that recognises ethnic, linguistic and cultural differences; and to create conditions of national unity based on the fullest expression of these diversities.

Beyond partial de-linking, and partial re-negotiations of the terms of integration into the world market, the people of Africa must sow the seeds of a new future based on imaginative alternative forms of production at the economic level and governance at the political level. This would include a new political culture of tolerance, and the creation of institutions that balance the rights of people with their responsibilities. Whilst it is impossible to return to the past, there are valuable insights that the past provides (such as the manner in which, in pre-colonial times, the people of Rwanda and of Somalia used to resolve conflicts amongst themselves), that could be the starting point for self-generated and endogenous institution-building. Only then will Africa move from violence to enduring peace with justice.

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Notes

1. See, for example, Paul Collier, Ibrahim Elbadawi and Norman Loayza , The Economics Of Civil Wars And Crime And Violence: An Outline of Main Issues and Tentative Schedule of Activities, DECRG, World Bank, 1998

2. I have explored this matter in some detail in: Globalisation and Africa's Options, International South Group Network, March 1999.

3. See Cherry Gertzel, Why won't wars stop? Conflict in Africa in the 1990s: Case of Somalia. Paper presented at the Conference of the Australian African Association of Political Science, Canberra, 1996.

Photo: Sebastiao Salgado, WCC

Entertaining Violence

By Usha Jesudasan

A few months ago, I stopped at a wayside tea shop. A young man came in and ordered some tea. He lit his cigarette and moved a few paces away. Meanwhile another man came and ordered his tea. As the first young man made no attempt to come and get his cup, the vendor gave it to the second man. Within an instant, a fight ensued. It started with abusive words. Then glasses of tea were thrown all over the place and fists banged into flesh. Eventually the fight broke up. An elderly man who had been sitting beside me remarked, It's just like the movies. And it was!

We move now to a school yard. A group of teenage boys are bullying smaller kids. It begins with pushing and shoving, then progresses to playful punching. The punching then begins to get nasty. A young boy watching this intervenes on behalf of the bullied boy. Let him go, he says. The others look at him threateningly. He is outnumbered. They move in and soon he is left lying in a pool of blood. Later, I hear his mother cry, I can't believe this, it's like something that happens only in the movies. But it isn't the movies anymore ... It is real life.

A normal home on a Sunday afternoon. A teenage boy is watching cricket. His mother has been nagging him all afternoon to clean up his room. Her voice grates on his nerves, and he can't hear the cricket commentator. Suddenly the boy goes out and comes back brandishing a kitchen knife. Is this a movie or real life? It's a script for a class play written by a ten-year-old boy.

The above stories show how violence in the media infiltrates our homes and lives without us even being aware of it. Turn on the television and there is bound to be a movie where the woman gets punched and beaten. Put on a computer game and the earth is being blown up and destroyed. Take a ride in a lift in a busy shopping mall, and the ugly graffiti – violence against property – hits your eye.

Violence in the media is portrayed as glamorous and manly. The macho man is the one with a gun. He can fling someone to the other end of the room with a flick of his wrist. When he's angry, he can slit someone's throat and walk away without any blood on his hands.

The media often portray violence as the only solution to any kind of conflict. The bad guys punch and batter and shoot their way out. But so do the good guys now. Only their weapons are faster, sharper and slicker. When we are left with no other alternatives but violence so we too end up believing that it is the only solution.

Violence in the media affects us in many ways. At first we are repelled by it. But slowly as we watch more and more we actually become numb to it

Violence in the media affects us in many ways. At first we are repelled by it. But slowly as we watch more and more we actually become numb to it. We come to a point when it does not affect us any more. And when we stop reacting to it on the screen, we begin to stop reacting to it in real life too. There was a time when my young son could not bear to watch any of the violence shown on the TV news. But as time went on and we began watching more and more bombing, shooting, blowing up, one day I realised that he was now watching it all without batting an eyelid. Doesn't it bother you any more? I asked. No he said, I just got used to it.

In many homes, violence is a way of life. As part of a writing assignment I asked a group of teenagers to describe their most unforgettable experience. One

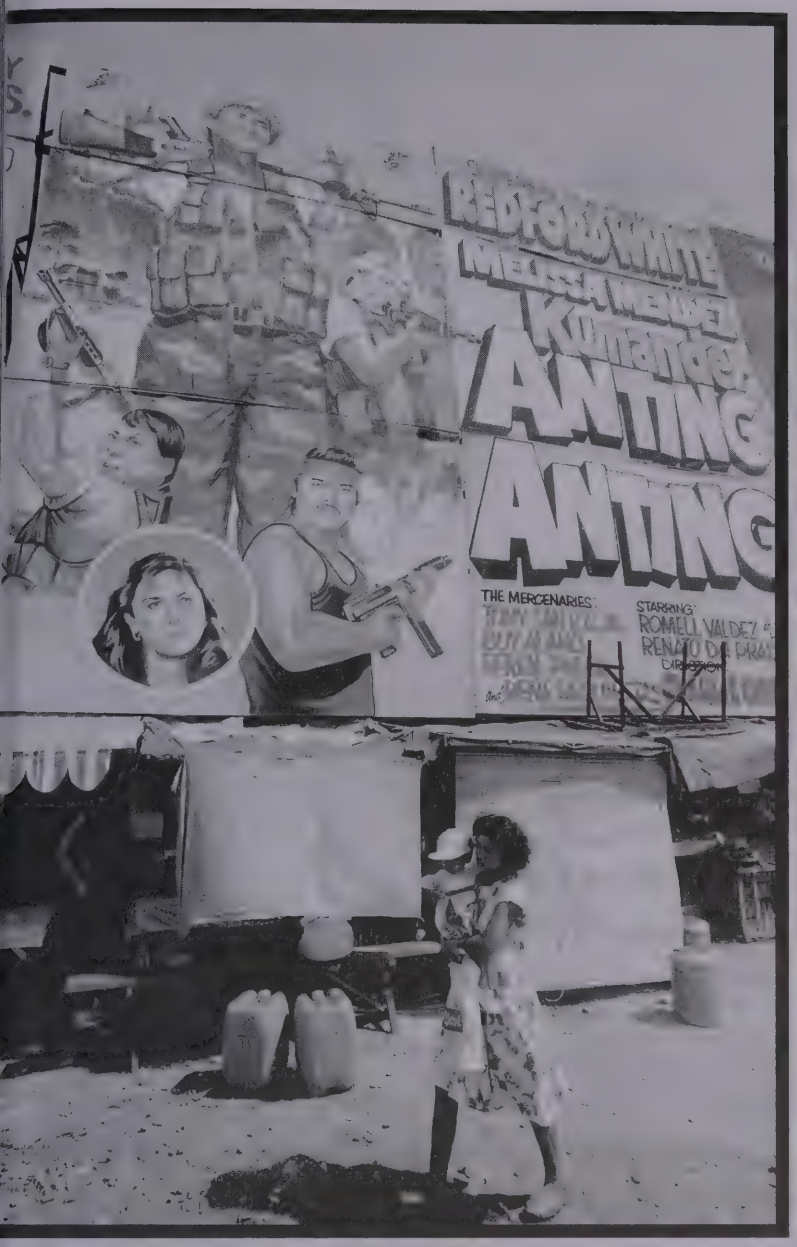

Photo:
Peter Williams, WCC

lad wrote that when he was ten years old, he had just handed over his report card to his father. Opening the card, the father found out that his son had not come within the first three places. He lifted him up, threw him against the wall on the other side of the room and walked away.

Violence robs a man of his innate dignity as a human being, and it deprives the violated person of dignity too. My gardener is a young man who has a nasty temper. Sometimes his wife or daughter help him finish the chores. When he gets angry and violent his eyes become blood shot, his face darkens and all the natural good looks that he is blessed with just disappear. Often he beats his wife, and as she cowers in front of him, she is like a little animal, frightened and vulnerable. Turn on the TV and you will see this scene played over and over again.

Violence is sometimes seen as exciting because it gives a sense of power over another person. This kind of thrill is satisfied only by more violence, more atrocities, and more bloodshed. Throughout the ages, violence and power seem to have gone hand in hand. Rape, kidnap and murder form the basis of any popular serial or film.

The worst thing apathy to violence in the media does is that it stunts our conscience. When we no longer see it as something hateful and destructive, when we start making excuses for it, when we accept it as inevitable, then something terrible has happened to us.

At a Sunday school discussion, I asked a group of teenage boys to name their five favourite films. All of them had chosen some of the most violent movies ever made. Intrigued, I told them about the script the ten-year-old boy had written for a class play where he pulled out a knife on his mother. She deserved it, said one. Imagine telling him twenty times, said another. I would have done the same, said yet another. None of them could see that this was not the natural way for a young son to behave.

As parents and teachers, can we afford to look the other way and pretend that it won't touch our children? I am reminded of a story about Chauntecleer, the rooster, who is appointed as watchman of the farm. In the river in the distance dwell snakes who would eat up all the animals if given a chance. But as long as the watchman keeps his eye on the river as it floods after the rains, the animals are safe. After a while, the rooster becomes so immune to the sound of the river that he no longer fears the serpents. It can't happen to me, he thinks. But one day, when he least expects it, the river floods and the snakes come into the yard. They attack the rooster's children first. If only I had been more vigilant, cried the rooster.

We can't afford to be like the rooster. We need to be vigilant, and take a stand, before it's too late. •

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SILENT DEATH THE POSSIBLE ABUSE OF GENETIC ENGINEERING FOR BIOLOGICAL WARFARE

By Jan van Aken, Sunshine Project

BREATHTAKING DEVELOPMENTS IN BIOTECHNOLOGY AND GENETIC ENGINEERING ARE DRAMATICALLY INCREASING THE THREAT OF BIOLOGICAL WARFARE. THE NECESSARY KNOWLEDGE IS NOW GLOBALLY AVAILABLE. GENETIC ENGINEERING ENABLES THE BIOWEAPONS MAKERS TO DESIGN EVEN MORE DESTRUCTIVE AGENTS. THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IS NOT KEEPING PACE WITH THIS RAPID DEVELOPMENT AND IS MISSING ITS CHANCE TO STRENGTHEN THE BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS' CONVENTION.

Thirty years ago, when biotechnology was still in its infancy and only few countries had the know-how required to grow quantities of viruses or bacteria, the probability of biological warfare was low. Technical barriers appeared too high for most countries to develop, produce, store and apply deadly strains without risk of infecting their own scientists, soldiers and population. These technical barriers eased the way to an international consensus on biological weapons – 143 nations signed the 1972 Biological and Toxic Weapons Convention (BTWC). UN member states agreed not to develop, produce or stockpile biological weapons or toxins for offensive purposes. The convention has its weaknesses, however, and it contains no provisions for verification of compliance.

Since then, rapid technical developments have increased the threat of bio-warfare. The international community thus decided in 1994 to negotiate a protocol to strengthen the BTWC. The negotiations were fueled by Russia's (1992) and Iraq's (1995) admissions of offensive biological warfare programmes. After five years of negotiations in Geneva, however, few core issues have been resolved and the Protocol appears likely to fail.

Genetically engineered: a new class of bioweapons

It sounds like science fiction, but it is already a deadly reality: lethal microbes, with no cure, invisible to detection systems, and able to overcome vaccines. In 'defensive' programmes, researchers in the USA, UK, Russia, Germany and other countries have genetically engineered biological weapons agents, building new deadly strains. And this is probably only the tip of the iceberg.

Disguising bacteria to cause unusual symptoms

Researchers from Obolensk near Moscow inserted a new gene into *Francisella tularensis*, a well-known microbial biological weapon agent that causes tularemia. The gene caused the bacteria to produce

Genetic engineering can make previously harmless bacteria a deadly weapon if genes are introduced from a highly pathogenic organism

a drug, producing changes in the behaviour of mice infected with the bacteria[1]. If used as a weapon against humans, the genetic modification would disguise *Francisella* bacteria infection. Victims would not show the usual symptoms of tularemia, making diagnosis difficult and delaying treatment.

Introducing a lethal gene into harmless bacteria

Genetic engineering can make previously harmless bacteria a deadly weapon if genes are introduced from a highly pathogenic organism. This was done by US researchers as early as 1986. Isolating the gene for the lethal factor in the causative agent of anthrax, the researchers introduced it into a harmless gut bacteria. The US team reported that the lethal gene was active in the new host, producing proteins that had the same deadly effects as they did in the anthrax bacteria[2].

Antibiotic resistant anthrax and tularemia

Antibiotic resistance is often used as a marker gene in genetic engineering experiments. The very same genes, however, could render biological weapons more dangerous by making agents less treatable. Any experiment with biological weapons agents using antibiotic resistance genes has a strong offensive potential, even if in the context of so-called defensive research. Despite this obvious problem, there is a long list of questionable experiments:

- Researchers at the main biological warfare research facility of the German Army in Munich cultured genetically engineered bacteria that are closely related to the causative agent of tularemia[3]. An antibiotic resistance marker gene was been inserted into these bacteria.
- Recently, researchers at Porton Down in the UK used genes conferring resistance to antibiotics in fully virulent strains of anthrax[4]. In the late 1980s, a researcher at the University of Massachussetts in Amherst also introduced antibiotic resistance genes into anthrax, making it less treatable with antibiotics[5]. Similar research has been published by the Institut Pasteur in Paris[6] and by a Russian laboratory in Obolensk[7].

All these studies are purportedly basic research, where antibiotic resistance is used as a marker gene. But the very same genetically engineered bacteria can be used to design more effective bioweapons compared to the natural anthrax strains, because bacteria that are resistant to antibiotics are more difficult

Photo: epd-bild / Gust

Photo: J. Maillard, ILO

to treat and will thus cause more harm if used as a weapon.

Invisible anthrax

In December 1997, the same Russian research group from Obolensk published a paper in a scientific journal on another effort to genetically engineer anthrax[8]. By putting new genes into fully pathogenic strains, they altered their outer surface, making existing anthrax vaccines ineffective against the new type. This modification also made existing detection systems unable to recognise these bacteria.

Western military experts were alarmed by this work. The chief of the bacteriology division at the US Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID) in Fort Detrick, Md, Col. Arthur Friedlander, commented: *This is the first indication we're aware of in which genes are being put into a fully virulent strain. They genetically engineered a strain that's resistant to their own vaccine, and one has to question why that was done.*[9] The Russian researchers also constructed a new vaccine against the new strain. This step is of particular importance, as it could enable an army to use such a genetically engineered bioweapon by vaccinating their soldiers against a specific strain, while the enemy remains vulnerable. This case is a particularly disturbing example of the offensive potential of genetic engineering.

Selective weapons

Another, still theoretical, use of genetic engineering gives bioweapons yet another very new quality. Biological weapons that are targeted to specific human populations while leaving others unaffected, may become technically possible. Incredibly, some governments have been reported to have such an intent. According to newspaper reports, the Israeli army is researching a biological weapon that will recognise a specific genetic structure that is Arab. During the former apartheid government in South Africa, the Rodeplaat Research Institute tried to develop bacteria that would only attack people of African origin with dark skin.

Biological weapons that are targeted to specific human populations while leaving others unaffected, may become technically possible. Incredibly, some governments have been reported to have such an intent.

It remains a controversial question as to whether or not selective bioweapons are technically possible. But ethnic conflicts leave little doubt that, if available, some would consider using them. Most established peace and disarmament researchers downplay the chances of selective genetic weapons; but concerned officials from several governments have publicly stressed the possibility. Based on current public knowledge it is impossible to rule out the possibility that genetic differences could be used to create weapons.

The Bioweapons Convention and ongoing negotiations

In 1994, a Special Conference of the Bioweapons Convention initiated negotiation of a legally binding document to strengthen the Convention. Since then, the member states convened 20 times, the last time in July 2000, but the outcome of the negotiations is still open.

Biological Weapons in the Drug War

The United States is developing fungi that will kill opium poppy, marijuana, and coca plants. They are designed to have a high plant kill rate and to be deliberately sprayed in crop eradication programmes.

Primarily intended for use in drug-producing areas of the Americas and Asia, some of the agents spread uncontrollably, are persistent in soils for decades, have questionable target-specificity and known health consequences for human beings and animals.

In addition to serious environmental and social implications, the development of these agents undermines the global consensus against biological weapons. Aerial crop eradication is a government tool of choice for areas beyond state control. Arguing that there is a loophole in the Biological and Toxic Weapons Convention for narcotic crops, the US and the UK seek to apply these pathogens in countries like Colombia in which there are ongoing civil wars or with which it has unfriendly bilateral relations.

These plans threaten to undermine international agreements prohibiting biological weapons. In an era of increasing biowarfare threats, any steps must be avoided that may lead to acceptance of biological weapons.

US drug producers repeatedly emphasize that they are reluctant to accept verification visits at manufacturing facilities.

One key, and controversial, issue is compliance. The verification measures will be based on a system in which existing industry or military biological facilities must be declared by each state party. Geneva negotiators still dispute, however, which facilities will be subject to declaration. To enhance transparency between countries, declared facilities will be inspected in a non-challenging manner. If a declaration detailing activities at a facility is unclear or allegedly incomplete, a clarification process will be initiated. In case of suspicion being voiced, e.g. concerning the alleged production or use of bioweapons, an investigation will be launched.

Some countries strongly oppose randomly selected visits and have called for cursory and/or voluntary visits in which inspectors have very limited rights. The US government is heavily under pressure from US pharmaceutical industry interests opposed to any strong verification measures. US drug producers repeatedly emphasize that they are reluctant to accept verification visits at manufacturing facilities[10]. The threat is real: If US industry does not support the protocol, ratification by the US Congress is highly unlikely.

It is now the responsibility of democratic groups worldwide to set clear standards to deter the production and use of biological weapons.

To strengthen the Convention as much as possible, and send a clear message around the globe, the protocol should encompass broad triggers for declarations, mandatory random and clarification visits with extensive rights for the inspectors, the establishment of an extensive export notification system, and a mandatory approval process for genetic engineering of bioweapon agents. Projects to enhance virulence or to overcome defense measures of micro-organisms must be banned to prevent the unrestricted genetic engineering of bioweapon agents.

It is now the responsibility of democratic groups worldwide to set clear standards to deter the production and use of biological weapons. A strong protocol will enhance transparency, making it much more difficult for countries to conceal a bioweapons' programme. In light of recent advances in genetic engineering, and considering the discoveries of biowarfare programmes in the former USSR and Iraq, an update and strengthening of the global ban on biological weapons is urgently needed.

The problem of biodefense research

Many countries maintain a biodefense programme for the development of vaccines, detection systems, protection measures and treatments for biological weapons agents. This research can be problematic, as in many cases defensive work involves the production, application or genetic alteration of a bioweapon agent. It can be very similar to offensive research. To test a cure for smallpox, mice and primates are infected with virulent strains of smallpox. To mimic real world scenarios, this is sometimes even done with weaponised agents applied as aerosols. In these cases, the difference between offensive and defensive research is solely a matter of intent.

The critical question is where to draw a line. It is neither feasible nor desirable to ban all biodefense research, because this would include any drug or vaccination development. All bioweapon agents are natural pathogens that cause illness and death and thus require medical research.

One line to draw relates to genetic engineering of bioweapon agents – the addition of genetic elements to any pathogen that could be used as a bioweapon. The application of genetic engineering to make microbes more dangerous or less susceptible to treatment cannot be justified for medical or biodefense purposes and must be strictly prohibited. Other bans could relate to the use of BW agents in aerosols, inhalation experiments, or the loading of mock grenades with simulant microbes.

The application of genetic engineering to make microbes more dangerous or less susceptible to treatment cannot be justified for medical or biodefense purposes and must be strictly prohibited.

Public awareness about the dangers of biodefense research is next to zero. Participation is made difficult by the scarcity of publicly available information about biodefense programmes. An open, broad discussion about the current state and future strategies of biodefense research is urgently needed. •

*Jan van Aken is co-founder of the **Sunshine Project**, an international non-profit organisation that gathers information on the potential harmful military use of biotechnology. The Project is concerned that abuse of some scientific advances may undermine international agreements on peace, disarmament and the environment. Through research, awareness building and advocacy, the **Sunshine Project** stands for the promotion of the international consensus to reject biological weapons.*

Notes:

1. Borzenkov VM, Pomerantsev AP, Ashmarin IP (1993) The additive synthesis of a regulatory peptide in vivo: the administration of a vaccinal Francisella tularensis strain that produces beta-endorphin Biull Eksp Biol Med 116(8):151-3 (Article in Russian)

2. Robertson DL, Leppla SH (1986) Molecular cloning and expression in Escherichia coli of the lethal factor gene of Bacillus anthracis. Gene 44(1):71-8

3. According to the public register of genetic engineering experiments at the Bavarian State Authority for Environmental Protection, in a letter dated March 27, 2000

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From plague victims to ethnic bombs

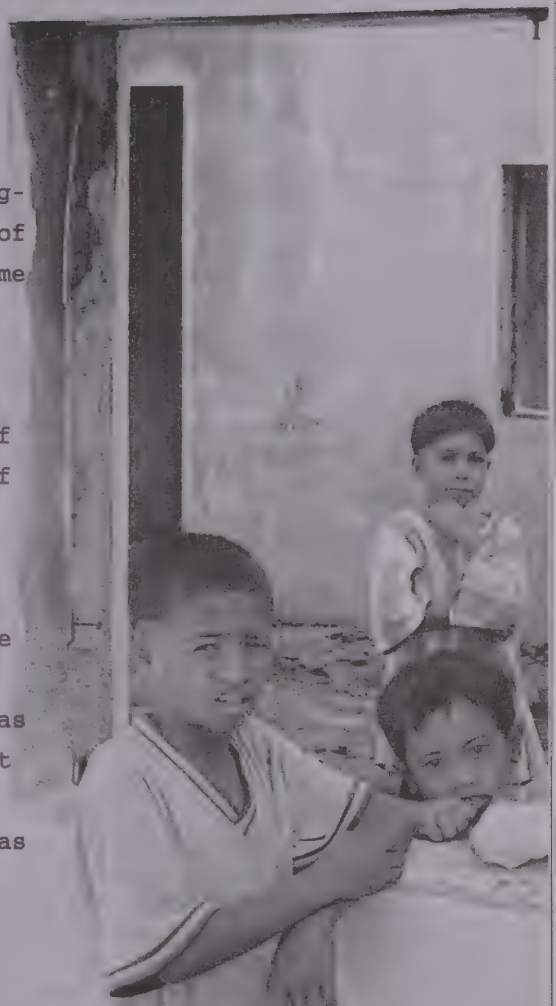
A short history of biological weapons

Ancient Times	Neanderthals poison arrows with anima feces. Roman EmpireSoldiers throw anima cadavers into their enemies' wells.
1346	Tartarian leader Khan Janibeg throws plague corpses into the city of Kaffa to infect the in habitants.
18th century	British soldiers deliberately distribute smallpox-infected blankets to Native Americans.
World War I	German soldiers infect horses with glanders and cattle with anthrax in sabotage acts.
1933-45	Japan conducts experiments on Chinese prisoners-of-war and uses biological weapons in attacks on Chinese towns in World War II.
1942/43	British military researchers perform tests with anthrax bombs on the small island o Gruinard near Scotland. For 50 years the is land was out of bounds for all human beings.
1950s	North Korea alleges the US Army used plague and anthrax-infected insects, fleas and spiders in the Korean conflict.
1992	Boris Yeltsin admits to an offensive BW programme in the former Soviet Union. In 1979 an accident with anthrax bacteria near Sverdlosk caused 100 fatalities.
1995	UNSCOM finds final proof for an offensive biowarfare programme in Iraq.
Future?	Genetically targeted "ethnic weapons" designed to only attack specific populations may become possible.

INTERVIEW

WITH NOBEL PEACE LAUREATE

JOSÉ RAMOS-HORTA



So often we witness, on our television screens, the violence of a country being torn apart by civil war, or a people struggling to eject foreign invaders from their soil. The people of East Timor have been struggling for years - for them it became an armed struggle - against the force of the Indonesian army of occupation.

Television cameras brought us the horror of the final acts of cruelty and oppression by the Indonesian armies. Thousands of East Timorese had to flee and, despite the peace agreements that followed, have still not been able to return homé.

In this issue of ECHOES, with its focus on naming some of the violences which trouble our world, we wanted to speak with someone from a country which has been brutalised and which has begun on the long path to full recovery. We are grateful that Nobel Peace Prize laureate and activist José Ramos-Horta agreed to share his reflections. For well over a decade he has traveled the world, an East Timorese in exile, earning enormous respect from governments and NGOs alike as he patiently and persistently worked for the independence of East Timor.*

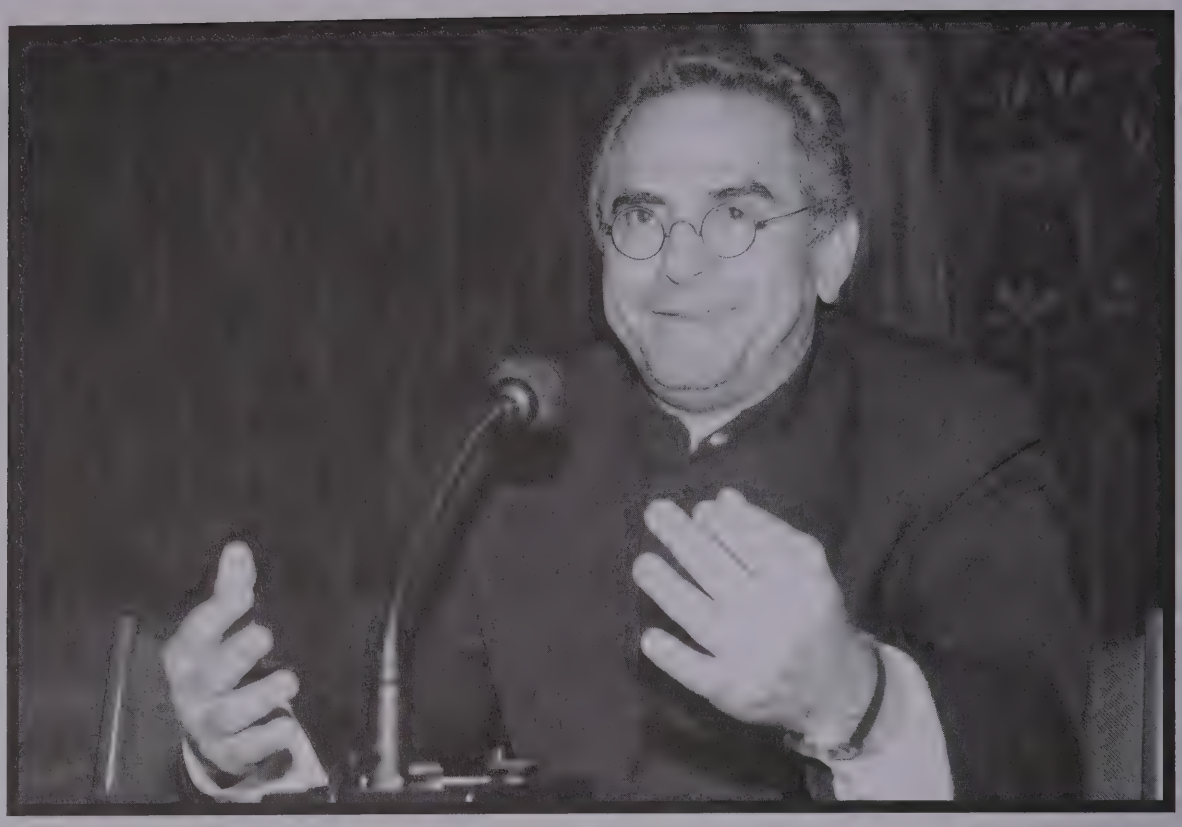
ECHOES: How would you describe the violence done to your people?

José Ramos-Horta: The violence unleashed on the people of East Timor was of such a scale that one can easily compare it with the greatest crimes against humanity that took place in this century, namely the genocide against the Armenians, the Jewish Holocaust or the Khmer Rouge holocaust. Out of a population of 700,000 in 1975, at least 200,000 were dead by 1979, only three years after the invasion by Indonesia. Then, in September 1999 the whole world was witness to one of the most graphic and televised systematic destruction of a country.

E: What has been the long term effect ?

JRH: The long-term effect is a traumatised society, two generations growing up in violence, which make it extremely difficult for the whole process of national healing and reconciliation. But the people of East Timor are a unique people, incredibly resilient, forgiving, tolerant.

Photo: Peter Williams, WCC



José Ramos-Horta speaks to WCC staff in Geneva, 12 April 2000.

Photo: Catherine Alt, WCC

With a leadership that preaches tolerance, reconciliation, non-violence, we will be able to consolidate peace.

E: What are the practical steps you can take?

JRH: One practical step is to talk about the need for reconciliation and forgiveness. Yes, just talk as often as you can. How does one solve problems in a family context? You talk things over.

Obviously, there are other steps to be taken, such as the guilty party asking for forgiveness and offering some form of reparation to the victims, doing community work, repairing the damaged properties or cleaning up the streets.

I am the head of our National Reconciliation Commission; working with the churches we continue what we know is a long process of dialogue, healing and forgiving.

In the case of more serious war crimes, then there has to be a special tribunal to judge these crimes.

Justice cannot be revenge or reprisal. In our case, I have said quite emphatically that the National Council of Maubere Resistance (CNRT) should not be involved in the judicial system. We are a political movement and political movements are never impartial judges.

So, the judicial system in East Timor right now is in the hands of the United Nations' Administration until such a time as our courts and judges are fully established. I have had two meetings with our newly appointed judges and paid tribute to them, offered my deep, sincere respect and support.

E: At this point in the history of your people, can you say the violence, the incredible loss of lives, was worth it?

JRH: I would not put it this way. Instead I would say we must build a country, construct a new society, free from violence, hatred and poverty. We must eliminate poverty, malaria, TB; we must provide each child with books, computers and milk; we must spend more on buying computers for the children than in weapons. If a few years from now, looking around us, we see a peaceful, tolerant and prosperous society, then I would say we did not betray the sacrifice of so many. No ideology, religion or cause may justify or prevail over the sanctity of life. However, if one has to die for freedom and dignity, then those who survive must not betray the death of those who gave their life for their country and for freedom.

It is an overwhelming task ahead of us; to rebuild the country from the ashes of destruction, house after house, school after school, clinic after clinic, entire towns, market places. We must provide jobs to the unemployed, offer a support system to the widows and orphans. We must reduce illness and poverty to human levels.

At the same time, we must build a truly democratic society, a system of government with checks and balances. Our women must regain a place in the policy and decision-making institutions from where they were always alienated.

We must prevent corruption from becoming rooted in our society and system of government. The media,

NGOs and civil society in general must play an active role in this whole enterprise of nation-building.

E: In the light of what you have said, could you describe the nature and character of the state you are planing? What kind of constitution do you foresee? Being a predominantly Catholic country, will Catholicism be the official religion?

JRH: We have some firm ideas as to the future constitution of the country. We have already a Magna Carta, adopted by acclamation at the founding of the CNRT, which enshrines all the human rights values and principles: rule of law, freedom of expression and assembly, freedom of religion. We have committed ourselves to accede to and ratify all major international human rights instruments that would make East Timor a country totally open to international scrutiny.

As far as religion is concerned there will be no official state religion and there will be no special privileges for a particular church. However I believe that, because of the role of the Catholic Church in the fields of education, health and cultural preservation, I would support offering it some financial assistance. They deserve it. The same goes for our small Protestant Church. They have done a lot for the country as a whole. We have an even smaller Muslim community of a few hundred people. Some are East Timorese, others are East Timorese of Arabic ancestry, and others are Indonesians. They too have rights, must be supported, cherished. It is our diversity that makes us richer.

E: In this age of globalisation, what is the future of a small country like East Timor, which does not yet have a significant market to offer? Can East Timor have a future other than as an appendage of another larger economy, such as Indonesia or Australia? Will East Timor have escaped one form of violence only to be confronted by another form – we might call it economic violence?

JRH: Globalisation has been a one-way street used by the richer countries. The poorer countries have been largely victims. However, one cannot run away from it. It is there to stay. We must make the best of it because there are many positive elements, such as access to information. We must educate our people, provide them with the tools of knowledge so that our societies can survive and compete.

Singapore did not start off rich. Singapore is in the global economy and has been doing very well. We do not aspire to be another Singapore. But we have great potential to prosper. We have a country blessed with a resilient and hardworking people and abundant natural resources – plenty of fertile land and rain, the best coffee in the world, an ocean that is rich in fish, and a host of mineral riches such as oil, gas and marble. I don't think that having Australia as our richest and closest neighbour is a curse. Quite the opposite, poor countries can develop better when they are on a major trading route, near major world economic and financial centres, near to a rich country. Our only, and real, concern is the tragic violence engulfing many parts of Indonesia that is tearing apart that great nation.

E: Are you happy with the progress you have made so far ? You are still very much in the hands of the United Nations? Is that a mixed blessing?

JRH: The UN is the favourite whipping boy and scapegoat for the failures of member states. The Security Council prints truckloads of resolutions imposing more and more responsibilities on the UN Secretariat and the secretary general to resolve a host of problems around the world. It would be great if the Security Council would also print out equal amount of monies to pay for all this.

Having said this, I would add also that there are a lot of incompetent people serving with the United Nations. But who is to blame? When the Secretariat prepares a mission, it sends governments a list of the personnel it needs. Some governments send their very best; some send a nephew or son of an influential leader, and some try to get rid of a political enemy by sending him out of the country and dumping him on the UN.

In the case of East Timor, we have some very committed and competent people, like Sergio Vieira De Mello, who work an average of 15 hours a day, seven days a week. We also have had some really incompetent and lazy people from all cultures and nationalities. In other words, the UN is no different from so many other large governments.

On balance, the UN performance in East Timor has been positive. At least it has brought a sense of peace and security to the people, the greatest gift you can give a people after 24 dark years of fear and terror. As for nation-building, institution-building, national construction and development, things are progressing better now after several months of a frustratingly slow start. •

** Note: This interview was conducted some weeks before Mr Ramos-Horta was sworn in as a member of the East Timor Transitional Cabinet, with responsibility for foreign affairs. He also assumed responsibility for foreign relations of the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET). ECHOES warmly congratulates Ramos-Horta on his return to his homeland and wishes him well for the challenges that lie ahead.*

Introducing the

By Deenabandhu Manchala

Challenged by the phenomenon of increasing violence all over the world, the churches meeting in Harare, Zimbabwe, for the Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, committed themselves to a pilgrimage of peace. The Assembly called the churches, ecumenical organisations and all people of goodwill, to work together to overcome violence through peace and justice. This initiative to seek peace and reconciliation through concerted and coordinated efforts over a period of ten years (2001 – 2010) stems from the World Council of Churches' passionate engagement with the issues of justice, peace and the integrity of creation, while relentlessly exploring the meaning and purpose of Christian unity in a broken world. The Decade to Overrcome Violence (DOV) is being seen as a new ecumenical rallying point as churches seek unity in partnership with one another and with all, including people of other faiths, in order to make a difference in world pervaded by the culture of violence.

The Decade to Overcome Violence will be launched in Berlin on February 4, 2001. The launch includes a worship service at Kaiser Wilhelm Gedächtnis Kirche and a public event at the Berlin House of World Cultures. On the previous day, the members of the WCC Central Committee will deliberate on the DOV process at a special plenary and Padares (workshops). A number of regional and national launches have already begun to take place in several parts of the world.

The DOV is not a programme of the WCC, but its call and invitation to work together for peace. It is an expression of the readiness of the churches to work with others to overcome violence and to build a culture of peace. As such, the DOV is expected to grow out of the sensitivity, creativity and commitment of the churches, concerned organisations, and individuals, in different parts of the world. The WCC commits itself to the task of making visible those initiatives of people, movements and churches to overcome violence so that these can inspire others to promote a culture of peace.

In promoting the DOV, the WCC emphasises three major elements:

1. ***Overcoming***. DOV is expected to highlight and inspire acts of overcoming violence.

2. ***Causes of violence***. A genuine way to overcome violence is to deal with its causes, which are created and perpetrated by political, economic, cultural and social structures.

3. ***Churches seeking peace***. The DOV testifies to the churches' resolve to be on a pilgrimage of peace in a broken world. As such, it is also expected to lead the churches through a process of self-discovery. The DOV points towards the challenge of dealing with the spirit, logic and practice of violence in creative ways.

In accompanying the DOV, the WCC will initiate and encourage:

1. ***Studies*** on the structures and cultures of violence in an effort to expose its causes: racism, sexism, xenophobia, casteism, ethnic and linguistic chauvinism, economic and political structures and policies...

2. ***Campaigns and movements*** working to overcome violence.

3. Production of **peace education material** in an effort to provide alternative values education in an environment where people are over-exposed to violence and are getting immune to it.

4. Innovative ***theological and liturgical initiatives*** to assist the churches to become communities of peace.

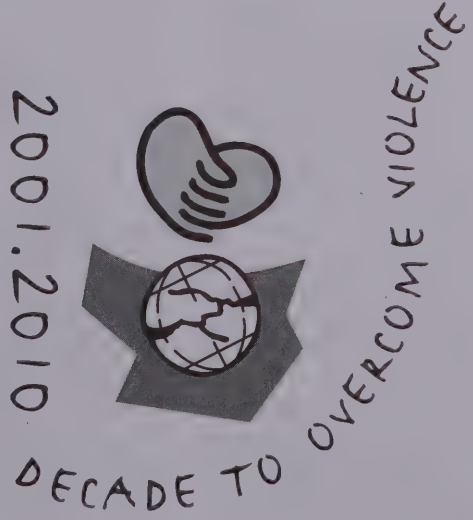
5. ***Sharing stories*** and experiences of overcoming violence through the web, publications...

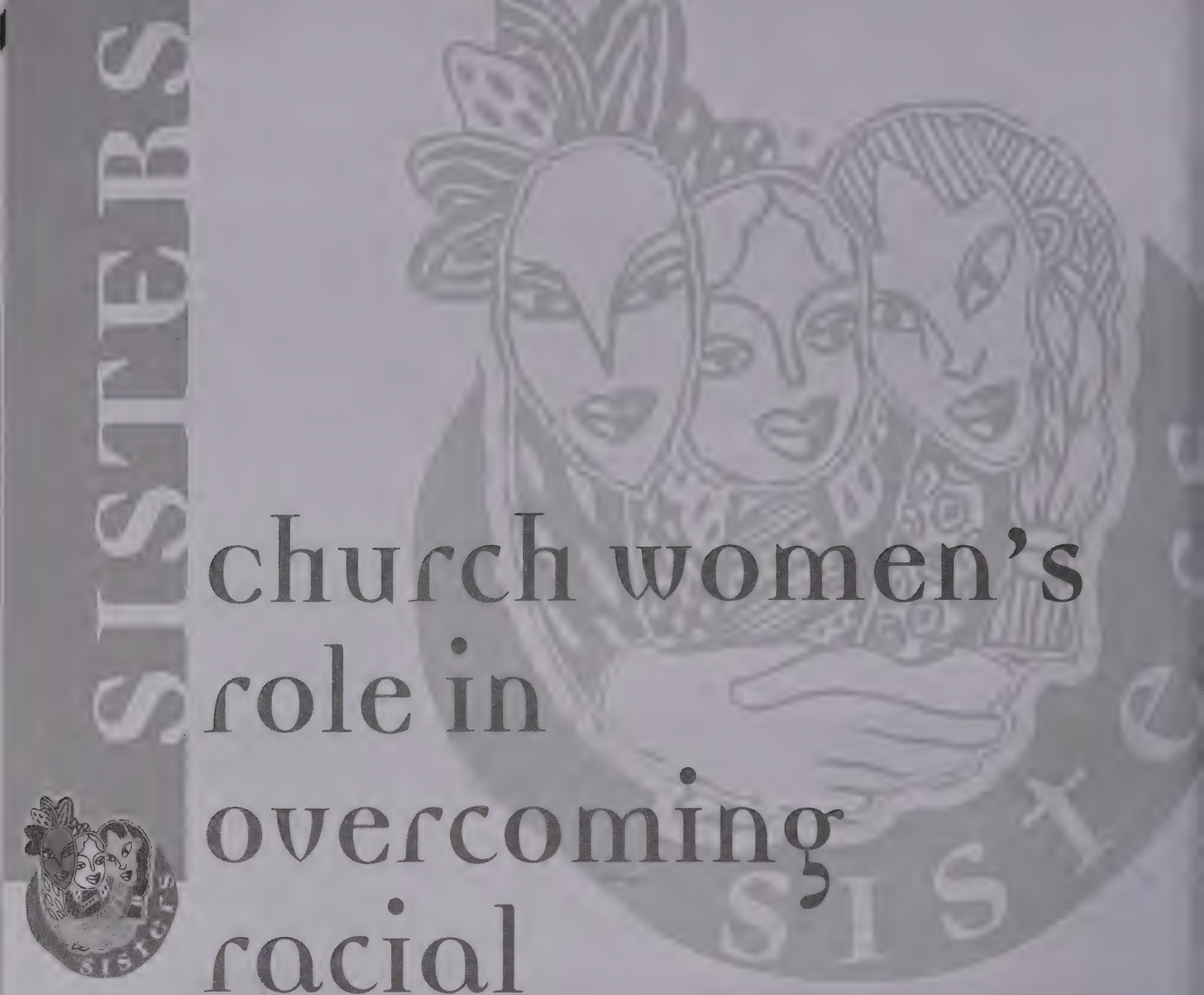
Deenabandhu Manchala, from India, is the WCC Executive officer for the DOV process.

A DOV CALENDAR

DATE	EVENT	VENUE	ORGANIZER/ CONTACT
November 2000			
1-5	International Interfaith Conference on Culture of Peace	Dhaka	Asian Muslim Action Network
3-5	International Conference: Mothering & Fathering: Visioning, Creating & Sustaining a Culture of Peace	Milwaukee, Wisconsin	St. Benedict the Moor Catholic Church
3-4	Ecumenical Autumn meeting/ ***DOV Launch***	Denmark	Church of Denmark
19	***DOV Launch – Asia***	Indonesia	Christian Conference of Asia/ Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI)
25	***DOV Launch***	?	North Elbian Evang. Lutheran Church
25	Annual Conference	Biel, Switzerland	Reformed Churches Bern-Jura
December 2000			
12	Hiroshima International Peace Gathering of 2001	Hiroshima, Japan	Hiroshima 2001
January 2001			
Jan/Feb.	***DOV Launch – West Africa***	Accra	Fellowship of Churches & Councils in West Africa (FECCIWA)
Jan/Feb	***DOV Launch, Southern Africa***	Angola or ?	Fellowship of Councils of Churches in South Africa (FOCCISA)
15-19	***CLAI Assembly/DOV Launch***	Barranquilla, Colombia	Latin America Council of Churches (CLAI)

Date	Event	Venue	Organizer/ Contact
February 2001			
March 2001			
?	***DOV Launch, Thuringia***	Thuringia	Ev. Lutheran Church in Thuringia
21	***DOV Launch – Eastern Africa & Great Lakes***	Uganda	All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) /Fellowship of CCs & Ches in Great Lake & Horn of Africa (FECCLAHA)
April 2001			
23-25	US Conference Annual Meeting/***DOV Launch***	?	US Churches
Spring 2001 (?)	***DOV Launch - Würtemburg***	Würtemberg	Ev. Lutheran Church in Würtemburg
May 2001			





church women's role in overcoming racial discrimination...

in Asia was the theme of a regional workshop organised at Hsinchu Bible College, Hsinchu City, Taiwan from 12-19 September 2000. Planned in partnership by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) Women's Desk and the WCC's Urban and Rural Mission (URM) and Women Under Racism (WUR) programmes along with the WCC SISTERS network, the workshop gathered twenty women from Indigenous and Ethnic minority communities from churches around Asia involved in working to overcome Indigenous-Aboriginal/Ethnic Minority discrimination in their own countries.

As an ecumenical space of encounter for women, the workshop encouraged the participants to share their life experiences and individual struggles, and fostered solidarity bonding for networking and further work on common priorities. A better understanding of the situation of Indigenous-Aboriginal and Ethnic Minority women in the region was achieved via a comparison between different countries – with presentations on Maori in Aotearoa/New Zealand, Aboriginals in Australia, Ainu and Koreans in Japan, Tibal taya, Hsinchua taya, Pinyin, Amis, Pumas in Taiwan, Philipino migrants in Hong Kong, the Chinese minority in Indonesia, Moros and Cordillera Peoples in the Philippines, Aos in India, minority Christians in Pakistan – as well as presentations on particular themes.

The presentations highlighted issues related to people's identity, culture, language and education:

- land and spirituality;
- assimilation policies;
- internalised racism;
- patriarchy, the added layer of colonialisation and current power imbalances between men and women;
- stolen generations of Indigenous People who were forced to leave their homes and brought

to mission schools;
- health-related issues, including alcohol, substance abuse, cancer, diabetes and mental health, and other societal problems that have destructive effects on young people;
- ethnic and religious discrimination;
- racism and sexism as forms of violence;
- domestic violence, trafficking, sexual slavery, forced marriage, forced sterilisation and abortion;
- the situation of domestic migrant workers;
- gender discrimination in the churches.

The SISTERS identified three **priority areas for action:**
1- **Education for empowerment** in order to
- bring the issue of racism and the concerns of women and Indigenous Peoples to the attention of the churches to urge them to act in light of the Christian faith;
- create awareness of women, church members, Indigenous Peoples and the general public of the evils of globalisation, especially its impact on women and Indigenous Peoples;
- empower Indigenous and Ethnic Minority women through skills training, exposure programmes, information dissemination and network-building, enabling them to reclaim their cultural identity, take on leadership roles and make informed choices and decisions.

2- **Networking/Alliance Building** aimed at developing, expanding and strengthening networks/alliances among church groups and Indigenous/ Ethnic Minority groups in the various countries and in Asia through information-sharing.

3- **Creating an alliance** of Indigenous and Ethnic Minority women at local and national levels. Towards that goal, SISTERS will organise forums of women leaders, individuals and victims, and work to strengthen the existing organisations and alliances.

Methodologies:
- seminar-workshops, skills training and consultations (on cultural identity, IP rights,violence against women, globalisation, leadership formation, networking and alliance-building etc);
- exposure and exchange programmes (with WCC/CCA support);
- information dissemination – via e-mail, newsletters, etc – and exchange;
- resource materials production;
- integrating courses in seminaries and theological programmes.

Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms were also identified.

While identifying their own specific roles in carrying out their priorities, the SISTERS called for the continued support of the CCA and the WCC in monitoring and responding to the concerns of Indigenous and Ethnic Minority women.

Asian women's declaration against racism

We are women from churches and Indigenous/ Ethnic Minority communities in Australia, Aotearoa/ New Zealand, Hong Kong, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, the Philippines, Japan and South Korea, and Taiwan. We gathered at Hsinchu Bible College, Hsinchu City, Taiwan from September 12-19, 2000 for a workshop on Women and Racism in Asia. The workshop was organised by the Christian Conference of Asia and the World Council of Churches.

We have come together in the spirit of solidarity and friendship to worship, study the Bible, and share our experiences, reflections and analysis of discrimination because of our race, ethnic background, gender, or economic status, and explore ways to combat racism and discrimination.

The worship and Bible studies on the theme enlightened and inspired us. We worked in a fully participatory and empowering way, enabling us to express ourselves creatively. We had the opportunity to be with Aboriginal women in Taiwan and to worship in their churches.

We have listened with pain and outrage to stories of suffering, despair and struggle of Aboriginal women such as the Ainu, Maori, Naga, Moro, and Tayal, Haka, Saiseat, Indigenous Australians, migrant workers and other church women from marginalised communities. We also remembered the other women who were not able to come, the Dalits and the women from Myanmar and their oppression from the caste and political systems they are in.

From these stories we realised the similarities of women's oppression. Her story is also my story, our experiences are one and the same:

> ***marginalisation of Indigenous Peoples, loss of cultural identity, loss of land and natural resources, violation of Indigenous women's rights, commodification of culture and resources, violence against women, religious discrimination, and suppression of the right to self-determination***

We recognised from our common experiences

that our sufferings stem from three root causes: patriarchy, colonisation and globalisation. We believe these to be contrary to God's will and must be condemned and eliminated.

We affirm the rights of all peoples to life, health, education, employment, prosperity, and security. We affirm the right of women and Indigenous Peoples to cultural expression, to participation in decision-making, to chart their own destiny, to liberation from the triple burden of race, class and gender, and to participate in the creation of a just, sustainable and peaceful society.

We commit ourselves to work together to break the barriers of religion, ethnicity, race, gender, class and all forms of discrimination that divide communities. We stand united and speak with one voice against all forms of discrimination and violence against women and minority groups in society; recover our cultural identities and enrich community life with our unique contributions; promote human rights, human dignity and human fellowship; and work for peace and reconciliation;

We commit ourselves to bring the issue of racism and the concerns of women and Indigenous Peoples to the attention of the churches and urge them to act in the light of the Gospel.

We commit to keep the memory of this gathering alive in our hearts through the work we will do in our own churches and communities, and through our continuing interaction and friendship. All these we offer in prayer to God, Source of the breath of life.

Hsinchu, 18 September 2000

Photomontage by Corazon Tabing-Reyes

SISTERS in Latin America

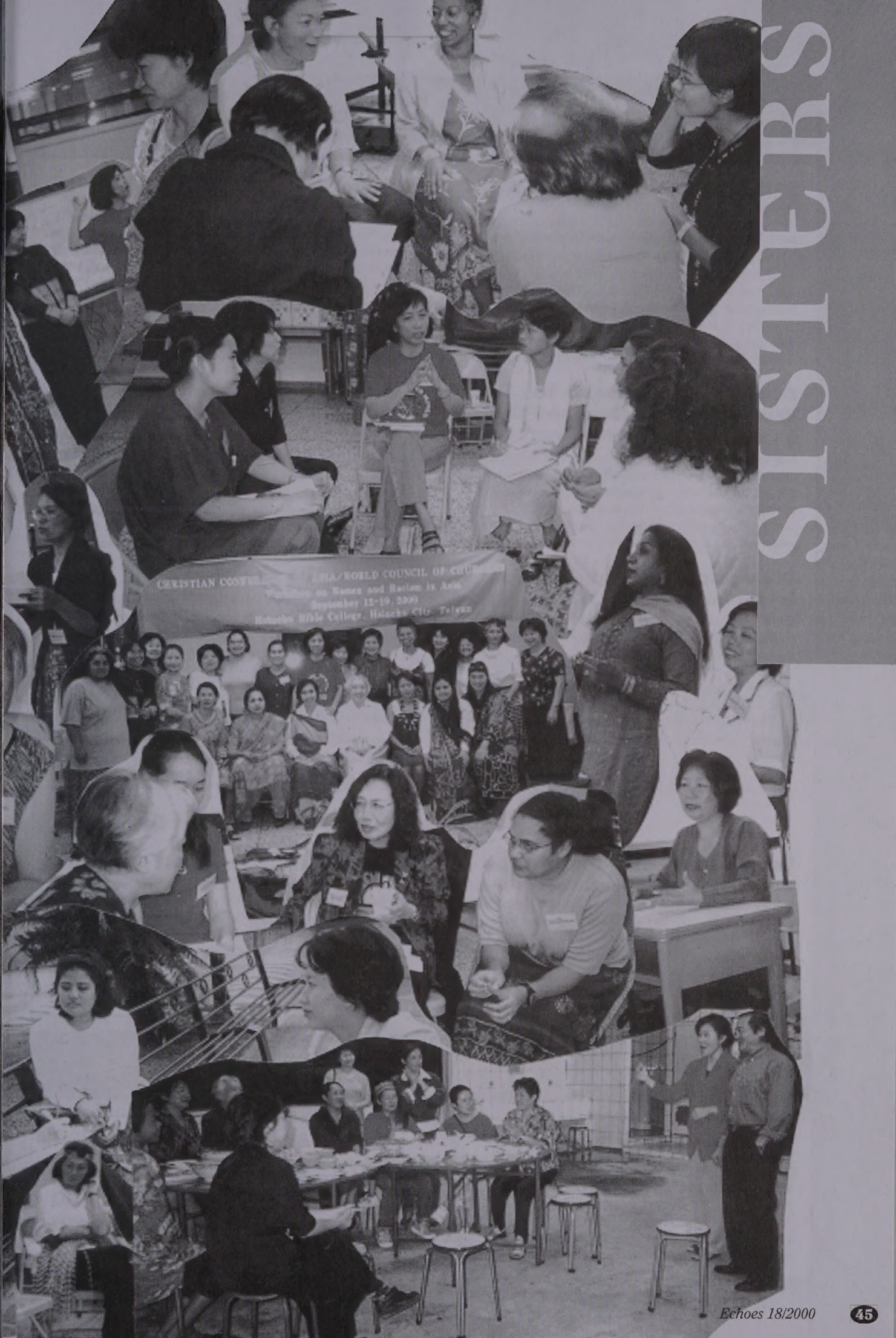
Bible and theology, gender, identity and class are key words for a *SISTERS* two-year training programme designed by and for Black and Indigenous women in Latin America.

A resource group made up of Elza Tamez from Costa Rica, Silvia Regina de Lima Silva from Brazil/Costa Rica and Maria do Carmo Moreira Lima from Brazil/Costa Rica, Nidia Fonseca from Venezuela/Costa Rica[1], Margarita de la Torre of the Indigenous Centre for Theological Studies in Ecuador, Ana Maria Vargas from ISEAT, Bolivia, and Marilia Schüller from Brasil, of the WCC's Programme to Combat Racism, and led by Senia Pilco of the Latin American Council of Churches' (CLAI) Service to the Family, Women and Children met in San José, Costa Rica 3-4 August 2000 to design the programme as a follow-up to a workshop on Theological Perspectives of Black and Indigenous Peoples, held in Matanza, Cuba, in May 1999.

The two-year training programme aims to equip a group of twenty Black and Indigenous women with skills to read the Bible from gender, identity and class perspectives, using *Historias de Vida* (life stories) as a methodological tool. Exclusion and marginalisation are the main hermeneutical keys.

The first three five-day modules (2001-2002) will address gender, ethnic/racial identity, class and power respectively, while a fourth module will deal with *Transversalidad*, the links between the previous three modules. The training will take place in Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala and Brazil – countries with large African-Descent and Indigenous populations.

Selection criteria, determined by CLAI's Service to the Family, Women and Children, stipulate that participants should be directly connected to a local group of women, and be ready to act as multipliers on their return to their own local churches/communities.


SISTERS

WCC PUBLICATIONS

SPIRITUAL VALUES FOR EARTH COMMUNITY

David G. Hallman

Larry Rasmussen, Union Theological Seminary, New York

Contemporary threats to the earth and the human family arise in large measure from the acceptance by many people of consumerism, economic globalisation and violence as the main values by which to live. In the face of the potent destructive forces unleashed by such life-styles, this book argues that respecting the earth and building sustainable community call us to live out such spiritual values as gratitude, humility, sufficiency, justice, peace, love, faith and hope. After an exposition of how each of these values motivates active engagement for earth community in Christian and other faith traditions, the author presents a case study of how individuals and groups are seeking to put that value into practice.

No 89 in the RISK Book Series, ISBN:2-8254-1326-7, 142 PP, SF15.- US$9.95 - £6.50

Democratic Contracts for Sustainable and Caring Societies: What Can Churches and Christian Communities Do?

Lewis S. Mudge and Thomas Wieser, eds

A fascinating collection of papers on the relationship between democracy, sustainability and globalisation. What should be done to put into action the agreements and conventions that the international community elaborated to make viable a sustainable society? How to move from these agreements and conventions into contracts that oblige nations and international agencies to participate in actions favourable for environmental sustainability? What can churches and Christian communities contribute to the formulation and enforcement of democratic contracts?

November 2000, Paperback, approx. 198pp., Approx. Sfr.22.50, US$14.50, £9.50

ISBN 2-8254-1334-8

Ethnic Conflict and Religion: Challenge to the churches

by Theo Tschuy

While media attention in recent years has focused on the bitter conflicts in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, violence has broken out in more than fifty places around the world between peoples who share the same terrain but differ in ethnicity, race, language or religion. The churches are not only confronted by the issue of ethnic conflict because of their commitment to reconciliation, justice and peace, but often are involved in the conflicts themselves because their own identity is tied up with one ethnic group.

This book is intended to help concerned Christian individuals, congregational Christian education programmes and local study groups to think through issues of ethnicity and nationalism, noting the complexities often obscured by popular stereotypes, stimulating biblical and theological reflection on ethnic identity and suggesting how they might helpfully respond to such situations of tension and conflict.

176 pp., WCC, Geneva, 1997. Product Number: 1190-6 - 15.90 US$ - 9.95 UK£ - 21.50 CHF

JPC PUBLICATIONS

Lead us not into Temptation

is a forth coming document prepared by an ecumenical group composed of theologians, economists, financial experts, sociologists and ecologists. This WCC document highlights essential areas for consideration by churches as they engage themselves in responding to the policies of the World Bank, the IMF and the challenge of globalisation. As the wind of globalisation blows, some churches are strong enough to meet the challenge of the global forces while others are in a state of powerlessness and unable to make a fresh critical review of economic and social questions that confront us today. The aim of the document is, therefore, to serve as a point of reference on how churches can deal with the ongoing relationships being created between the World Bank and the churches.

Copies of this document can be ordered from the JPC team.

PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST

Reaching Reconciliation: Churches in the transitions to democracy in Eastern and Central Europe

In the early 1990's the face of Europe, and indeed the world, changed. The transitions from authoritarianism to democratically-minded governments in Eastern and Central Europe liberated millions of people and hastened the end of the 20th century's most long-standing conflict – the cold war. Yet, as with all wars, wounds can be slow to heal. Reconciliation, despite its cen-

PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST

tral role in peaceful conflict transformation, is a long road to follow.

The churches in East Germany, Poland and Estonia have been significant societal actors before, during and after the demise of the formerly all-powerful actors of the communist parties. What was the churches' role in the transitions? What have they done to heal the wounds of the past and where are they heading on the road to reconciliation?

Here, in **Reaching Reconciliation**, *Hans Baer, Joan Löfgren* and *Halina Grymala-Mosycynska* approach these questions in their case studies on East Germany, Estonia and Poland, respectively. Edited by *Lucia Ann McSpadden*, this volume builds upon and in-depth analysis by the Life & Peace Institute of the churches in 'new democracies' in Africa, Asia, Europe and Central America.

Of interest to theologians, policy-makers, activists, scholars and students of Eastern and Central Europe, **Reaching Reconciliation** is an important collection of history, analysis and understanding of the origins of societal conflict in these three countries and the pursuit of reconciliation by the churches.

ISBN 91 87748 47-9, 280 pages, US$19.00, £11.50, EUR 16.00.

Please send orders to:

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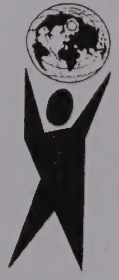

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